DH
DECCAN HERALD
The Power of Good

CHEAPER

1. Cancer drugs, medicines and food for special medical purposes related to seven rare diseases
2. Textiles, seafood products and leather items
3. Key components for microwave ovens
4. Components or critical parts, including engines, for manufacture of aircraft
5. Solar glass ingredient, sodium antimonate
6. Capital goods for processing of critical minerals
7. Tour package, foreign education

7.0 out of 10

BUDGET RATING

★★★★★★★★★★

20 industry executives gave a cumulative average rating of 7 out of 10 for the Union Budget 2026 in a DH Poll

COSTLIER

1. Low-cost imported umbrellas
2. ATM/Cash dispenser machine and its parts and components
3. Potassium hydroxide
4. Fertiliser inputs
5. Coffee roasting, brewing or vending machines
6. Imported zoo animals & birds
7. Castor oil cake
8. Film & broadcasting equipment for foreign crews
9. Minerals, iron ore, coal
10. Stock options & future trading

Biopharma
Rs 10,000 cr investment over 5 yrs. involves complex medicines manufactured from living organisms

Semicon
Outlay on electronics manufacturing to rise to Rs 40,000 cr; to launch India Semiconductor Mission 2.0

Critical minerals
Rare Earth Corridors in Odisha, TN, Kerala & AP for mining and refining of rare earth minerals

Textiles
Mega textile parks will be set up; 5-pronged integrated policy framework to boost employment-intensive sector

Defence
Rs 7.85L cr for 2026-27; steep hike over last year's allocation of Rs 6.81L cr. Capital outlay pegged at around Rs 2.19L cr

Tourism
Rs 2,438.40 crore for the sector. Eco-friendly mountain trails, development of 15 archaeological sites

AI
Tax holiday till 2047 for foreign companies that provide cloud services to customers globally using data centres in India

FM Budgets for 'New Economy'

Amid global turmoil, Nirmala Sitharaman bets on capex-led growth, keeps tax slabs unchanged

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

In her record ninth consecutive Budget presented on a Sunday, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chose heavy lifting on capex to keep the growth momentum on track, support manufacturing and shore up rupee by encouraging capital inflows, but avoided any major tax-related changes and populist announcements linked to upcoming Assembly elections.

Custom duty on a range of items, including imported raw materials for manufacturing of aircraft and nuclear power projects, have been slashed amid continuing global trade tensions.

Tariff on all dutiable goods imported for personal use is proposed to be reduced from 20% to 10%.

The move may send a positive signal to US President Donald Trump, who has been pressing India for lowering tariffs on American products.

The Budget does not offer any fresh bonanza for taxpayers. Instead, the finance minister proposed to increase Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on futures trading and options.

This triggered a sharp sell-off in the stock market, with benchmark Sensex and Nifty slumping by close to 2%.

Amid concerns over capital outflows, which have pulled rupee down to record lows, Sitharaman proposed a number of initiatives to ease inflow of foreign money.

Investment limit for entities under the Persons Resident Outside India scheme (PROIs) is proposed to be hiked to 24% from 10% of their paid-up capital, and the individual investment limit to 10% from 5%.

The Budget also places a significant focus on the "New Economy" by prioritising frontier technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), the "Orange Economy" (creative industries), and strategic manufacturing sectors such as semiconductors and biopharma.

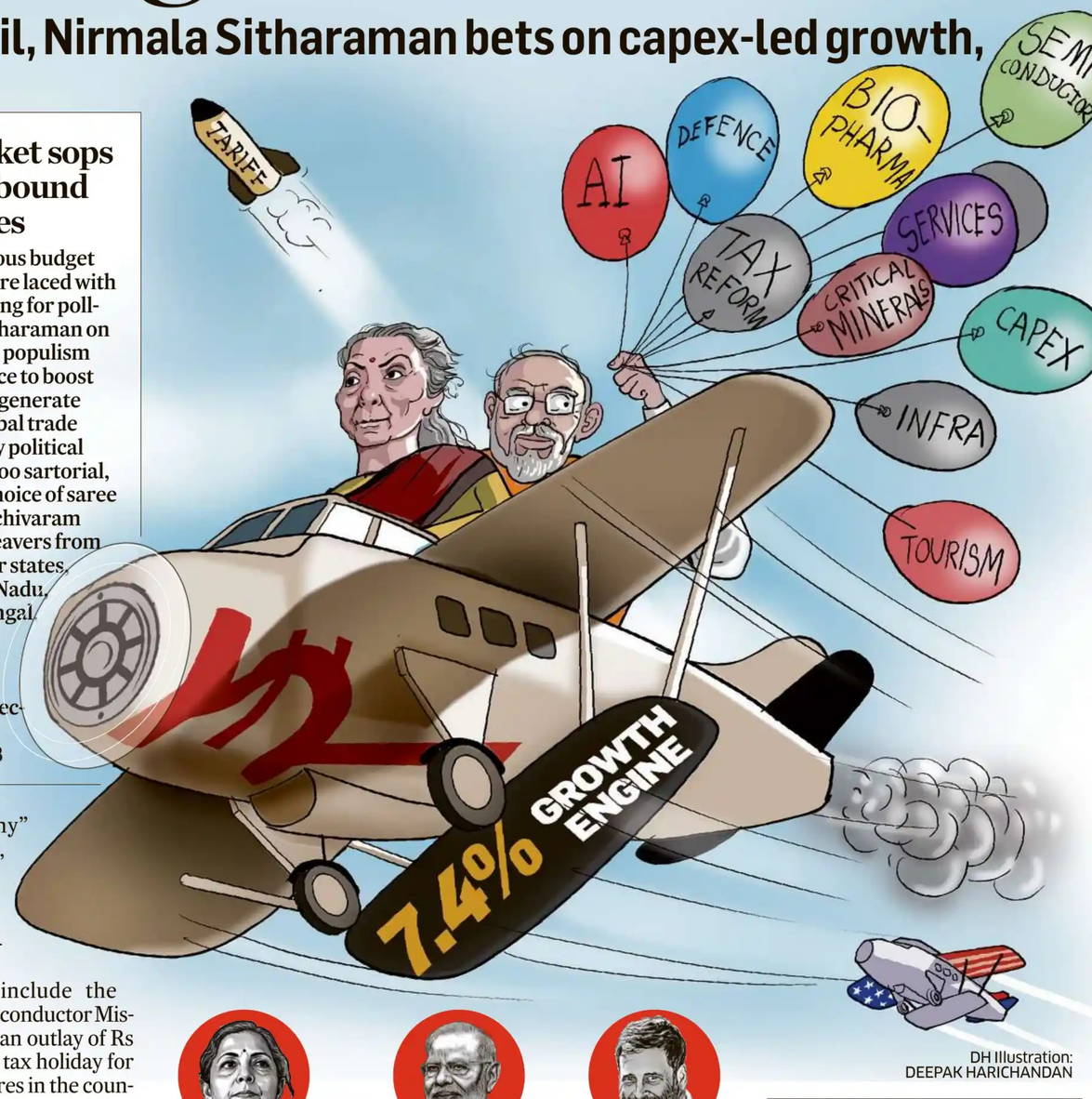
Key initiatives include the launch of India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 2.0 with an outlay of Rs 40,000 crore and a tax holiday for setting up data centres in the country. Foreign companies providing cloud services using data centres located in India will not be required to pay taxes till 2047.

The minister also announced setting up a high-powered committee to review the impact of new technology like AI on the services sector, which contributes around 55% to the country's GDP.

▸ FM Budgets, Page 4

No big-ticket sops for poll-bound states

Unlike her previous budget speeches that were laced with political messaging for poll-bound states, Sitharaman on Sunday shunned populism for fiscal prudence to boost job creation and generate growth amid global trade turmoil. The only political statement, that too sartorial, came from the choice of saree she wore - a Kanchivaram silk crafted by weavers from Tamil Nadu. Four states, including Tamil Nadu, Assam, West Bengal, Kerala and one Union Territory, Puducherry, will have assembly elections in 2026.
Details on Page 8



DH Illustration: DEEPAK HARICHANDAN

Our government has decisively and consistently chosen action over ambivalence, reform over rhetoric and people over populism.
Nirmala Sitharaman Finance Minister

Today's Budget is historic. It reflects the aspirations of 140 crore Indians. It strengthens the reform journey and charts a clear roadmap for Viksit Bharat.
Narendra Modi, PM

Youth without jobs. Falling manufacturing. Investors pulling out capital. Household savings plummeting. Farmers in distress.
Rahul Gandhi Cong leader

SEE PULLOUT FOR FULL COVERAGE

FM hikes Securities Transaction Tax in F&O trade

Import barriers lowered to counter Trump's tariffs

Three 'kartavyas' to power MSME engines

Infrastructure projects get Rs 12.2 lakh crore

VB-G RAM G gets more than MGNREGS last year

To promote coconut, cashew, cocoa, sandalwood

K'taka's share of central taxes up, to get Rs 63k cr

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Karnataka's share in taxes and duties from the Union government's tax pool for the next five years has risen from 3.67% to 4.13% with the state all set to get Rs 63,049.58 crore in 2026-27 even as the Finance Commission has recommended retaining states' share in central taxes at 41% for the five-year period beginning April 1.

In what could bring some cheer to southern states though all their demands have not been met, their share in central taxes has increased while those of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal among others have declined.

However, southern states may still be critical of the tax devolution plan, as they have concerns over the criteria adopted by the Finance Commission. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has already described it as a "disturbing outcome".

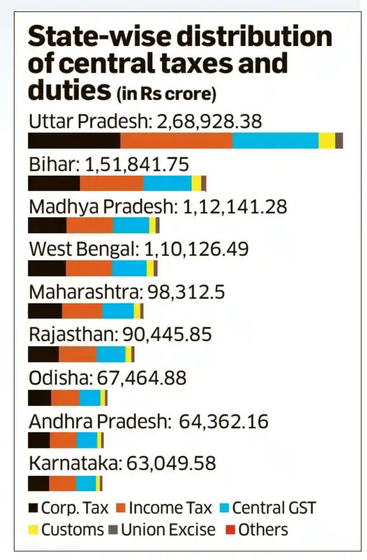
In her Budget speech on Sunday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government has accepted the recommendation of the 16th Finance Commission headed by Arvind Panagariya to retain the vertical share of devolution at 41% and has provided Rs 1.4 lakh crore to the states for 2026-27 as Finance Commission Grants, including rural and urban local body and disaster management grants.

While Karnataka's share in the past five years was 3.64% under 15th Finance Commission, the latest recommendation would mean it would get Rs 12,247.93 crore more from 2025-26.

However, Karnataka has not crossed 4.71% earmarked under 14th Finance Commission.

▸ K'taka's share, Page 4

State-wise distribution of central taxes and duties (in Rs crore)



B'luru among 7 city economic regions with Rs 5k-cr allocation

▸ **NEW DELHI, DHNS:** In a major push to strengthen urban growth, the government will set up seven city economic regions (CERs), including in Bengaluru, Surat and Varanasi, with a proposed allocation of Rs 5,000 crore per region over five years.

The plans will be implemented in a "challenge mode".

Presenting the Union Budget in the Lok Sabha, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman described cities as India's engines of growth.
Details on Page 6

Bullet train corridors aim B'luru-Chennai travel in 1.13 hrs, B'luru-Hyd in 2 hrs

BENGALURU, DHNS: Bengaluru-Chennai and Bengaluru-Hyderabad are among the seven high-speed rail (bullet train) corridors announced in the Union Budget on Sunday.

"In order to promote environmentally sustainable passenger systems, we will develop seven high-speed rail corridors between cities as 'growth connectors', namely i) Mumbai-Pune, ii) Pune-Hyderabad, iii) Hyderabad-Bengaluru, iv) Hyderabad-Chennai, v) Chennai-Bengaluru, vi) Delhi-Varanasi, vii) Varanasi-Siliguri," Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated.

Addressing a press conference later, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the seven rail corridors would be built with indigenous technology at an estimated cost of Rs 16 lakh crore.

Vaishnaw said travel time on the Bengaluru-Chennai corridor would be one hour and 13 minutes, and Bengaluru-Hyderabad two hours.

▸ Bullet trains, Page 4

STT impact: Sensex falls 1,500 points

The Sensex crashed over 1,500 points or 1.88% on Budget day as the finance minister proposed an increase in the Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on derivatives.

The move aims to keep small investors away from the speculative F&O market. Nifty crashed nearly 2% or over 593 points to settle at Rs 24,825.45. STT on Futures has been raised to 0.05% from 0.02%. Vaqarjaved Khan, Senior Fundamental Analyst, Angel One Ltd said the STT hike on F&O triggered a knee-jerk sell-off.
Details on Page 8

Woman killed, househelp ends life in B'luru

BENGALURU. DHNS: A domestic worker died by suicide after allegedly killing his elderly woman employer in southern Bengaluru, officials said on Sunday.

The 65-year-old woman was allegedly murdered by Devaraju, 50, her house help, in KAS Layout in BTM 2nd Stage. Devaraju was a native of Tamil Nadu, police said. The woman's name has been withheld at her family's request.

Police said the woman's 27-year-old daughter, who lives with her, was sleeping when the alleged crime occurred.

In her police complaint, the daughter stated that between 10.30 pm on Saturday and 4.30 am on Sunday, the house help allegedly murdered her mother before hanging himself at the same location afterwards. The daughter remained oblivious to the crime as she was asleep.

Senior officers, including JCP (East) Ramesh Banoth, visited the crime scene.

▸ Murder-suicide, Page 4

HOLY GATHERING
Devotees flock to the Yellamma hillock at Savadatti on the occasion of Bharat Hunnime on Sunday. DH PHOTO

Manipur govt formation: NDA MLAs rush to Delhi for 'positive outcome'

GUWAHATI, DHNS: In a fresh bid for restoration of a "popular government" in conflict-torn Manipur, several MLAs belonging to the BJP and two allies of the NDA have rushed to Delhi for a meeting on Monday with senior leaders amid renewed hopes for a "positive outcome".

"We all hope that the government is formed soon," Sharda Devi, state BJP president, told reporters in Imphal before flying to New Delhi.

She said the high command "summoned" all MLAs of BJP and two allies of NDA, National People's Party (NPP) and Naga People's Front (NPF), to discuss government formation.
Details on Page 9

T20 WORLD CUP

Pak to boycott game against India; ICC issues warning

KARACHI, PTI

Pakistan on Sunday announced a boycott of its high-profile men's T20 World Cup group league match against India, a move that is likely to have serious repercussions even as Islamabad cleared the national team's participation in the rest of the global event starting February 7.

"The Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan grants approval to the Pakistan Cricket Team to participate in the ICC World T20 2026, however, the Pakistan Cricket Team shall not take the field in the match scheduled on 15th February 2026 against India," the government posted on social media.

The decision, conveyed through an official government statement, is being seen as a political protest linked to Bangladesh's removal from the tournament after the world body declined its request to shift matches from India to Sri Lanka on security grounds.

The ICC, on its part, questioned the Pakistan government's decision and also issued a warning that this boycott could lead to punitive sanctions.

"The ICC hopes that the PCB will consider the significant and long-term implications for cricket in its own country as this is likely to impact the global cricket ecosystem, which it is itself a member and beneficiary of," the global body said in a statement.

Fans cheer during a Champions Trophy match in Dubai in 2025. PTI FILE

"While the ICC respects the roles of governments in matters of national policy, this decision is not in the interest of the global game or the welfare of fans worldwide, including millions in Pakistan," it further stated.

The India-Pakistan clash is the most anticipated fixture of any ICC event, drawing peak global viewership, sponsorship interest and broadcast revenues.

The host broadcaster could incur advertisement revenue losses which could be anything in the range of Rs 200 crore to Rs 250 crore for a marquee game whose 10-second commercial slot can cost up to Rs 40 lakh.

While a walkover would hand full points to India, the ICC retains the authority to impose financial penalties on the PCB. However, neither the PCB nor the government has made it clear as to what happens if Pakistan and India clash in the knock-out stages of the competition.

Sports Corner

Padikkal's ton takes K'taka to Ranji quarters

Skipper Devdutt Padikkal continued with his run-scoring spree as his 85-ball 120 took Karnataka into the quarterfinals of Ranji Trophy, with a five-wicket victory over Punjab in their final Group B encounter in Mohali on Sunday. Needing to score 250 in 40 overs, Karnataka romped home in 27.5 overs courtesy Padikkal's eighth first-class ton.
Details on Page 12

Alcaraz sweeps past Djokovic, wins Aus Open

Carlos Alcaraz

Carlos Alcaraz swept past Novak Djokovic to win his first Australian Open on Sunday and become the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam, denying the Serbian a 25th major. The Spaniard dismissed the 38-year-old, 2-6, 6-2, 6-3, 7-5 on Rod Laver Arena.
Details on Page 11

India rout Pak, enter U19 WC semifinal

Young Kanishk Chouhan showed his all-round prowess as India comfortably outclassed arch-rivals Pakistan by 58 runs in a Super Six encounter to qualify for the semifinal of the ICC U-19 World Cup here on Sunday.

India will meet Afghanistan in the semifinal.
Details on Page 11

Delhi Capitals beat UP Warriorz

Delhi Capitals got over the line in a modest run-chase by five wickets to beat UP Warriorz and make their way into the Eliminator clash of the Women's Premier League on Sunday. Delhi's win also knocked out the defending champions Mumbai Indians from the race to the WPL playoffs.
Details on Page 12

6 months to stop sewage inflow at Yelahanka Puttenahalli Lake

Report suggests temporary measures to curb pollution

BENGALURU, DHNS

About six months are required to complete the works diverting sewage flowing into the Yelahanka Puttenahalli Lake from its northwestern neighbourhoods, a report by the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) has said, recommending temporary measures to avoid pollution.

The lake made headlines in 2024 when sewage from several upstream areas was brought in by a storm water drain ending at its boundary.

The Yelahanka Puttenahalli Lake and Bird Conservation Trust approached the southern zone bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT).

The erstwhile Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) were brought before the tribunal. Officials submitted that there was no alternative other than the lake's walking path to lay a pipeline carrying sewage from one end of the lake to the STP in the northeastern direction.

The trust questioned the proposal to build pipelines within the lake boundary and expressed concern over permanent damage. However, officials convinced the tribunal to permit the pipeline.

The lake made headlines in 2024 after sewage from upstream areas flowed in through a stormwater drain ending at its boundary. DH FILE PHOTO

Prevent pollution

The member secretary reported that while the BWSSB has completed laying a hume pipe in 600 metres of the lake area with 15 manholes, the lateral work to connect to the main sewer line is not complete.

The additional chief engineer, BWSSB Project-1, informed that the work on establishing the lateral line will be completed within five to six months.

'Aid lake rejuvenation'

The report recommended, "The sullage mixed with sewage entering the lake may be conveyed through the newly established BWSSB main sewer line as a temporary measure to avoid nutrient influx and help with lake rejuvenation work."

The sewage from the area will be processed in a six-mld sewage treatment plant downstream of the lake. About 85 per cent of the civil work is complete and the rest is expected to be finished in another four to five months, the report said.

States, UTs lag in waste management: CPCB

Annual review finds inconsistent data, poor compliance with SWM Rules

BENGALURU, DHNS

Nearly a decade after the Centre notified the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules in April 2016, several states are still struggling to comply with basic requirements, with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) flagging serious gaps in implementation.

The CPCB examined the annual reports submitted by states and Union Territories (UTs) for 2023–24 and 2024–25 under Section 24(4) of the Rules.

The review forms the basis of the pollution board's consolidated annual report on the status of SWM implementation by local bodies and includes recommendations to strengthen the waste management regime.

Reports for 2023–24 revealed major deficiencies, including the absence of basic data such as waste processing capacity, the number and capacity of scientific landfills (SLFs), and the location of unscientific dumpsites.

A solid waste management facility in Bengaluru. DH FILE PHOTO

For instance, Karnataka reported 158 "operational landfills", but did not disclose the quantity of waste dumped at these sites.

Several states failed to provide details on the quantity of solid waste collected, while in some cases the figures submitted were inconsistent.

In Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, the CPCB noted that the quantity of waste treated and landfilled exceeded the total waste generated.

Problems persist

The gaps continued in the annual reports for 2024–25, with most states again failing to provide details on SLFs.

Karnataka did not furnish information on the capacity or location of SWM processing facilities, while Tamil Nadu reported having "no operational SLF".

Madhya Pradesh once again showed more waste being treated and landfilled than generated, while Kerala reported collecting more waste than it generated.

Jharkhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Lakshadweep were among the 16 states and UTs that failed to submit their annual reports for 2024–25.

The CPCB has asked these states to submit the reports and provide the missing details within 15 days.

Politician–contractor nexus

CM Subbaiah, who led ward-level SWM initiatives in north Bengaluru for over two decades, said waste management would improve only if the politician–contractor nexus was dismantled.

"Waste management begins with segregation at source. What we need is decentralised waste collection and management, for which local bodies must be empowered. Breaking the politician–contractor nexus is essential to create such an environment," he said.

Citizen grievances dominate South corp budget meet

BENGALURU, DHNS: Bengaluru South City Corporation Commissioner KN Ramesh on Sunday met Residents' Welfare Associations (RWAs) to gather public suggestions for the upcoming budget.

The meeting focused on infrastructure gaps in HSR Layout, BTM Layout and Kasavanahalli.

Roads & traffic

Residents urged road widening at Holiday Village Road and Talaghattapura. They also stressed the need to ease congestion at Rajatagiri Junction and on the stretch from Akashnagar to DLF Road.

In Kasavanahalli, representatives asked for the relocation of six houses to help improve Kaikondrahalli Junction.

Eco & sanitation

Residents made conservation of Madiwala Lake a priority, with proposals to develop it as a biodiversity park.

Residents of Elenahalli and Kasavanahalli wanted an immediate end to sewage entering local lakes.

For waste management, the commissioner was urged to remove black spots and start ward-level wet waste processing to cut costs.

Civic authorities pledge black-spot removal and ward-level wet waste processing. PHOTO: BBMP

Commissioner Ramesh said a new skywalk is coming up at Vega City Mall Junction on Bannerghatta Road.

He added that a new 'Adopt-a-Street' policy will be launched soon, so citizens and companies can maintain parks and junctions through CSR funds.

All requests will be checked based on fund availability, the commissioner said, adding that field visits are already underway to address local issues.

Residents' priorities

- Installation of CCTVs and streetlights in dark spots.
- Standardisation of footpaths in HSR Layout and 110 villages.
- New skywalks in Haralur and Kasavanahalli.
- Residents of RBI Layout have suggested wet waste processing at the ward level to reduce transportation costs.
- Identify garbage black spots, install additional kasa kiosks, and construct more public toilets.
- Removal of encroachments and completion of underground drainage (UGD) works to prevent sewage inflow into the lakes, ensuring cleaner water.

No unified system keeps queues endless at hospitals

AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

The lack of a uniform patient registration system across government hospitals in Bengaluru has led to long waiting hours.

Long lines are a common sight at most government hospitals in the city.

In 2022, the Health Department introduced a fast-tracked QR-based registration system for patients to register by scanning a code. Patients had to share their personal and demographic information with the hospital. This initiative aimed to ensure correct details and reduce long queues.

Initially, the project started at CV Raman Hospital in Indiranagar and was later extended to Jayanagar General Hospital and KC General Hospital.

However, the initiative has faced problems as the technology is complicated for most users. With large numbers of incoming patients, self-registration has made little impact.

Under the system, a patient must enter the ABHA or Ayushman Bharat Health Account number, after which the information is filled automatically.

If the patient does not have an ABHA number, they must register on the official website, which requires an Aadhaar number and the OTP sent to the registered number.

Speaking to *DH*, Dr Surendra KS, Medical Superintendent, Jayanagar General Hospital, said, "The patients comprise mainly senior citizens and people who are not very adept with the use of technology. They have trouble accessing the self-registration. Many bring different devices and numbers not registered with Aadhaar and they do not get the OTP, which creates more trouble. The younger patients are more aligned to using this technology."

Patients are also facing problems such as server downtime and selecting the wrong department for OPD consultation, leading to administrative issues.

Regarding the self-registration system, Dr KS Rajesh, Medical Superintendent of CV Raman Hospital, told *DH*, "We have around 1,500 patients every day. No matter how fast registrations are done, the queues and crowd only get longer. The crowd subsides only after 2 pm."

At major hospitals under the Medical Education Department, such as Victoria Hospital and Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital, queues are also a challenge for patients.

Dr Kavya ST, Director and Dean of Bengaluru Medical College and Research Institute, told *DH*, "Victoria Hospital uses an e-office system for OPD and IPD, but sometimes, due to repeated server downtime and slow internet connections, we run into problems, which lead to longer queues."

Long queues at a government hospital in the city as patients await treatment. DH PHOTO/AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR

In 2022, the Health Department launched a QR-based registration system, allowing patients to share personal and demographic details by scanning a code. The move aimed to ensure accurate records and reduce long queues. But the initiative faces challenges, with most users finding the technology difficult.

CURTAIN RISES

25th International Bharat Rang Mahotsav, Rangaparishe begins

BENGALURU, DHNS

The 25th International Bharat Rang Mahotsav and Rangaparishe 2026 were inaugurated in a grand ceremony in the city on Sunday.

The festival is a joint initiative of the National School of Drama (NSD), New Delhi, the Karnataka Nataka Akademi, and the Department of Kannada and Culture.

Senior Kannada litterateur Baraguru Ramachandrappa inaugurated the Bharat Rang Mahotsav, while Sri Panditaradhya Shivacharya Swamiji of the Taralabalu Branch Math, Sanehalli, inaugurated Rangaparishe.

Multilingual actor Prakash Raj released a special commemorative issue of Rangaparishe to mark the occasion.

The 'Utsava Gourava' award was conferred on Sri Panditaradhya Shivacharya Swamiji and veteran actor Umashree. The 'Ranga Gourava' was awarded to the Antaranga Amateur Theatre Group, marking 40 years of service, and to Kadamba Ranga Vedike.

The inauguration featured theatre songs presented by Pravara Theatre, Vijayanagara Bimba, and Bangalore University teams. A Bharatanatyam recital by Natya Bhairavi Kalakuteera was also staged.

Students of Daksha Tarang troupe perform at the cultural event on Sunday. DH PHOTO/RANJU P

On the festival's opening day, 'Babuji' by NSD, New Delhi, and 'Kodalla Andre Kodalla' by the Nirdiganta Theatre Group were staged.

The event was attended by folk scholar Go Ru Channabasappa, Kannada Development Authority Chairman Purushottam Bilimale, and former Akademi president Srinivasa G Kappanna. Director of the Department of Kannada and Culture Gayathri KM and Karnataka Nataka Akademi President KV Nagarajamurthy were also present.

Vocal duet today

BENGALURU, DHNS: Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira will present a vocal duet by Saralaya Sisters — Kavitha Saralaya and Triveni Saralaya — with Nalina Mohan (violin), Anoor Ananthakrishna Sharma (mridanga), and Sunaad Anoor (khanjira) at 5.30 pm on Monday at the Bangalore Gayana Samaja, KR Road.

The programme is part of the Annual Spring Music Festival.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Lecture: 'Jaimini Bharata' by Pavagada Prakash Rao; Organised by Pavagada Prakash Rao Platinum Jubilee (Amruta Mahotsava) Committee; Pathi Auditorium, Sri Rama Mandira, NR Colony; 5.45 pm.

CULTURAL

Bharat Rang Mahotsav and Rangaparishe-2026: Play: Nammai Marand Rai Nam Marakkamattom by Ilango Adigal; Ranga Mandira Sadir Melam, Chennai Troupe; Kalagrama Samskrutika Samuchaya; 7 pm; Play: Mukhyamantri; Kala Gangotri Troupe; Gubbi Veeranna Stage; 7 pm; Play: Saalumarada Thimmakka; Rangachirantana, Govt First Grade College, Vijayanagar Troupe; Dr Siddalingaiah Stage; 5 pm; Play: Dhanvantari Chikitse; Samanvaya Cultural Trust Troupe; Dr Siddalingaiah Stage; 7 pm; Festival Honour; Girija Lokesh, Senior Artist; Theatre Honour; Shriranga Stage; 4 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Mainly clear sky

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	30.0°C
Minimum	16.0°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	86%
Sunset (Feb 2)	6:20 pm
Sunrise (Feb 3)	6:46 am
Moonrise	5:55 pm
Moonset	6:10 am

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

DH DECCAN HERALD
Please contact for subscription/ service queries
(late receipt, non receipt or irregular supply of newspaper)
: 9008366666
: support@deccanherald.co.in

Need a hand? Write to us

Letters of grievances are pouring in and we are doing our best to accommodate as many as possible. Readers may write in to highlight civic problems affecting their locality and we will help address them in an interactive and effective manner.

Grievances and issues related to public utility agencies such as Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) and Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Bescom) would be highlighted in the weekly column. The writeups, which could be accompanied by photographs highlighting the problems, will be published on Mondays. Mail your grievances to: peoplesproblems @deccanherald.co.in

Extend park timings

Earlier, municipal parks in the city were open from 5 am to 8 pm, but authorities now allow access only from 5 am to 11 am and 4 pm to 8 pm.

This change has affected many residents who rely on the parks for morning and evening walks, exercise, and recreation.

We request the authorities to restore the original timings of 5 am to 8 pm, which would greatly benefit citizens and encourage healthier lifestyles.

H V Sridhar
HSR Layout, 6th Sector

Dangerous leaning tree in MSR Nagar

A tree in front of our house at 7th Cross, 6th Main, MSR Nagar, has been uprooted and is leaning dangerously. It poses a serious risk to electricity poles, power lines, and the general public, especially children.

We urge the authorities to take immediate action and ensure the tree is made safe at the earliest.

TM Jayakeerthy
MSR Nagar

Trapeze-walking on Mysuru Road

The stretch of Mysuru Road between the RR Nagar arch and Jnanabharathi metro station narrows sharply and lacks a proper footpath, despite heavy traffic throughout the day.

The only option for pedestrians is to use thin, elevated stone slabs — barely wide enough to walk on. Forget senior citizens, children, or women; even a young, healthy adult has to perform a trapeze walk to avoid falling onto the road, where speeding vehicles pose a serious risk.

Walking directly on the road is nearly impossible due to the traffic volume, leaving pedestrians with no safe choice.

It is surprising that authorities have not addressed this hazard. Immediate action is needed to provide a safe walkway in this area.

Sreeshan K
Serenade Layout

Thin, elevated stone slabs leave pedestrians with little walking space.

Deploy traffic cops on busy crossroads

Many busy crossroads in Bengaluru lack traffic police presence, leaving local citizens to manage traffic voluntarily.

The government has taken no action so far. Regular deployment of traffic police is urgently needed, especially during morning peak hours, as congestion makes commuting difficult.

We urge the authorities to address this matter seriously and ensure proper traffic management.

B Ramesh
Kumaraswamy Layout

Speed-breakers needed in Tatanagar

The 5th Main Road in Tatanagar, Kodigehalli, is a residential stretch about 600-metres long and 60-feet wide, housing two creches and a hospital.

Despite this, the road has no speed-breakers. Vehicles, especially two-wheelers with modified silencers, often speed dangerously, creating a nuisance. Late at night and early in the morning, the noise disturbs residents' sleep, and wheelies are frequently seen even during the day.

Multiple requests to the authorities have gone unanswered. Installing speed-breakers would help ensure the safety of seniors and children. The GBA is urged to act immediately.

BV Venkatarama Reddy
Retired Professor, IISc

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

Publication of Corrigendum to e-Tender Notice No. CAO/CN/BNC/EPC/153/2025 Dated: 31-10-2025

The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following work:

Item of work	Approx. Value
Construction of Proposed Doubling of Track including Signal & Tele communication, Electrification of New line & Upgradation of OHE of Existing line & Electrical General Service works between Toranagallu (incl.) and Ranjithpura (excl.) (21.460 km). (Tender Ref. No:TNGL-RNJP-EPC-01)	Rs. 3,14,62,71,018/-

Date of Closing	
Existing	Revised
30-01-2026 (15:00 Hrs)	20-02-2026 (15:00 Hrs)

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PUBLIC NOTICE

We **M/s GV Techparks Pvt Ltd**, hereby bring to the notice of General Public that State Level Environmental Impact Assessment Authority, Karnataka (Constituted by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India) has granted Environmental Clearance for construction of Proposed IT Office building at Sy. Nos. 5/2, 6/2, 6/1A, 6/1B, 6/1C, 7/1, 7/2, 7/3, 7/5, 7/6, 7/7, 9/1, 9/2, 9/3, 9/4, 10/1, 10/2, 11/3, 11/4, 11/6, 11/7, 11/8, 11/10, 11/11, 11/12, Part of 11/2, 12/1, 12/2, 13, 14, 15, 16/1 of Mylasandra Village and 15/2,31,Part of 15/1, 16, 32 of Pattangere Village,Kengeri Hobli, Bengaluru South Taluk, Bengaluru Urban District by M/s. GV Techparks Pvt Ltd. bearing File no SEIAA 50CON 2025 dated 16/01/2026. A copy of clearance letter can also be seen on the website of Parivesh Portal - SEIAA Karnataka at http://parivesh.nic.in.

BEFORE THE KARNATAKA REAL ESTATE REGULATORY AUTHORITY AT BENGALURU.

COMPLAINT No. 8691/2021

BETWEEN : Mr. Sanjiv Kumar Jain & Mrs. Shubha Jain ...COMPLAINANTS

AND : M/S. BCIL REDEARTH INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED

M/S. CITRUS VENTURES PRIVATE LIMITED ...RESPONDENTS

SUMMONS / NOTICES

To, Respondent No.1.

BCIL REDEARTH INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED A company incorporated under the provisions of Companies Act, 1956 Having its registered office at No. 37-1/1, R. K. Chambers, Ground Floor, Aga Abbas Ali Road, Bangalore-560042 Represented by its Managing Director **Mr. Chandrashekar Hariharan.**

Also at No.252, RMV 2nd Stage, Corner of 5th Cross, 2nd B Main Road, Raj Mahal Vilas Second, Bangalore 560094.

Proposed Respondent No. 3:-

i. Mr. Chandrashekar Hariharan Director of BCIL REDEARTH INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED, Director of Erst while M/S. BCIL REDEARTH DEVELOPERS INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED.

Proposed Respondent No. 4:-

ii. Mrs. Kanchan Kaur Director of BCIL REDEARTH INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED, Director of Erst while M/S. BCIL REDEARTH DEVELOPERS INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED.

Both at: No. 37-1/1, R. K. Chambers, Ground Floor, Aga Abbas Ali Road, Bangalore-560042.

Also at: 31/1, 2nd Main Road, Vyalikaval, Bangalore - 560003.

Also at : No. 397, 13th Cross, Sadashivnagar, Bangalore- 560080.

Whereas the above complaint is filed by the complainant under Section 31 read with section 11, 17, 18, 19 of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 (RERA Act), read with Rule 29 (1) of the Karnataka Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Rules, 2017 against the respondents.

Notice is hereby given to you to appear before this Hon'ble Authority either in person or through counsel duly instructed or through someone authorized by law to act for you in the above case **on 17th day of February 2026** in case you intend to contest the above complaint. If you fail to appear the same will be dealt with, heard and decided in your absence.

Issued under my hand and the seal of this Authority, this 27th day of January 2026.

By order of the Authority
Secretary, Karnataka Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Bengaluru.

'South Cinema invests in new voices, Mumbai relies on old guard'

Cinema chosen medium to explore societal narratives: Producer Aditi Anand

ASHWIN B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

For Aditi Anand, the producer behind acclaimed films like 'Paan Singh Tomar' and 'No One Killed Jessica', the journey through the Indian film industry has been less of a linear path and more of a gritty, cross-country expedition.

Speaking at BIFFes in Bengaluru on Sunday, Anand opened up about her transition from the studio-driven culture of Mumbai to the dynamic, creator led energy of Chennai.

Anand, who is currently shuttling between cities for her latest project 'Thathumi' and basking in the success of the Tamil hit 'Bison: Kaalamaadan', described her entry into cinema not as a film student, but as a student of politics. "I grew up in the 90s, with a sense of what it means to be a democratic country," she shared, noting that cinema became her chosen medium to explore those societal narratives.

Aditi Anand, producer of acclaimed film 'Paan Singh Tomar', speaks at a session at BIFFes on Sunday. DH PHOTO

Reflecting on the differences between the Hindi and Tamil film industries, Anand pointed out that Mumbai studios often shy away from first-time filmmakers. In contrast, she found the South to be a "dynamic" landscape fueled by an "army of young men and women" eager to experiment.

"The South industry is so invested in research and development investing in new voices," Anand remarked. However, she also noted challenges of being a woman in a male-dominated field, admitting there were moments she wanted to quit due to the inherent biases.

Addressing aspiring producers, Anand emphasised that while the soul of a story matters, the practical reality is rooted in finance. "Everything comes down to money. You have to respect where it's coming from to sustain the industry," she said, advising against constant experimentation without an eye on returns.

She urged the younger generation to shed any condescension toward digital platforms like YouTube or Instagram. "This is the time of the personal brand," Anand noted.

Woman survives suicide bid, three children die

BADAMI (BAGALKOT DISTRICT), DHNS: A 28-year-old woman allegedly hanged her three children, aged between 2 and 5, to death before consuming poison, at Hiremuchchalgudda village in Badami taluk on Sunday.

The woman has been identified as Roopa Hanumanth Goudar.

Roopa, however, survived the suicide attempt. She has been admitted to a private hospital in Bagalkot and is undergoing treatment.

The deceased children have been identified as Samruddhi Goudar (5), Preetam Goudar (4) and Suksheet Goudar (2).

Upset over her frequent fights with her mother-in-law, the woman is said to have taken the drastic step, according to the police.

Police pesonnel -- CPI Kariappa Banni and Police Sub-Inspector Hanumanth -- visited the village.

The Badami police have registered a case in this regard and further investigation is on.

True cinema power is offering democratic space: Girish Kasaravalli

'Filmmaking has undergone radical shifts every 20 years'

ASHWIN B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

Acclaimed filmmaker Girish Kasaravalli on Sunday emphasised that the true power of cinema was its ability to offer a democratic space for the viewer, rather than serving as a tool for emotional manipulation.

Delivering the V K Murthy Annual Memorial Lecture on "Film Construction and Deconstruction," he traced the evolution of cinematic aesthetics over the last century.

He argued that the grammar of filmmaking had undergone radical shifts every 20 years, deeply influenced by the socio-political tensions of each era.

Reflecting on early cinema, Kasaravalli contrasted the "Analytical Dramatic School" of D W Griffith which prioritised emotional impact through close-ups with the Soviet "Montage School."

"The Russians argued that cinema should not merely create an emotional effect but provoke intellectual engagement," he said. "For them, it was about the filmmaker's political questioning becoming apparent to the audience."

Acclaimed filmmaker Girish Kasaravalli speaks at BIFFes session titled 'The Art of De-construction in Cinema,' in Bengaluru on Sunday. Film experts N Vidyashankar (extreme left) and G S Bhaskar are also seen. DH PHOTO

Kasaravalli highlighted the transition to Neo-realism and the philosophical shifts of the 1940s, where filmmakers like De Sica and Rossellini sought to "make the viewer see beyond the surface."

"In daily life, we see but we do not notice. Neo-realism forced us to go beyond the surface and understand the reality within the frame," he observed.

Turning to contemporary aesthetics, he discussed how masters like Tarkovsky and Ozu utilised "time" as a primary element. He noted that unlike literature or painting, cinema is the only medium that can effectively use "real time" as its core material.

In a tribute to the man who shaped the grammar of film education in India, Kasaravalli walked down memory lane to celebrate the centenary year of Professor Satish Bahadur.

Speaking at a session titled 'The Art of De-construction in Cinema,' Kasaravalli credited the late academician with transforming him from a "clean slate" into a filmmaker who understands the profound architecture of the film.

The session, which featured insights from N Vidyashankar and G S Bhaskar, delved into Bahadur's tenure at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), where he pioneered the discipline of Film Appreciation.

"When I joined FTII, I was a boy totally unexposed to cinema," Kasaravalli reminisced. "Professor Bahadur didn't just talk about the sociopolitical content which he felt could be learned from history books, but he taught us how a film is constructed. He was the father of film analysis."

Kasaravalli highlighted Bahadur's unique methodology of "shot-by-shot" deconstruction. Using examples like Satyajit Ray's Pather Panchali and Vittorio De Sica's Bicycle Thieves, Bahadur would spend days analysing a single sequence to show how space and time are manipulated to create an experience rather than just a narrative.

Kasaravalli observed a lack of "dynamism" in modern popular genres. He noted that while today's films often move at a frantic pace, they frequently lack the internal tension and spatial awareness that Bahadur championed.

Association mounts pressure on state govt to implement OPS for govt staff

CS Shadakshari

GADAG, DHNS: Karnataka State Government Employees Association (KSSUA) state president C S Shadakshari has said that a mega convention of the government employees would be organised to press the state government on reinstating the old pension scheme (OPS).

Speaking at the state executive committee meeting held at Pandit Bhimsen Joshi Rangamandir here on Sunday. "There are 2.93 lakh NPS employees in the state. If the government pays 10% for OPS, it will burden the government Rs 3,000 crore per year. However, there are 2.73 lakh vacant government posts in the state and the government is saving around Rs 2,500 crore a year. We have apprised the Uma Mahadevan-headed NPS committee of it. The government staff and the association is firm in its demand for OPS, he said.

"The Congress party in its manifesto for the 2023 Assembly elections had mentioned that the party was committed to implementing the OPS, if voted to power. The ruling Congress should keep its word. The CM should table the report before the Cabinet and implement the old pension scheme," he said. The association is planning to hold a mega protest rally to draw the attention of the state government in this regard. The protest venue and the date will soon be decided, Shadakshari said.

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(Part-2)
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Hon'ble Governor of Karnataka and Chancellor of the University

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Rear Admiral Vikram Menon, VSM
Flag Officer Commanding
Karnataka Naval Area (FOK)

Guest of Honour
Dr. M. C. Sudhakar
Hon'ble Minister of Higher Education,
Govt. of Karnataka and Pro-Chancellor of the University

Date : 02-02-2026 at 11:00 AM
Venue : Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Auditorium "Jnana Sangama", VTU, Belagavi

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CII experts hail budget, say focus on tech and health

BENGALURU, DHNS

The experts of the Confederation of Indian Industry called the budget "balanced" with focus on tech, connectivity and healthcare. They, however, pointed out that there were no significant announcements.

N Venu, past chairman CII Karnataka State Council and Managing Director & CEO – India and South Asia, Hitachi Energy, said, "The budget did not have any big announcements and allocations. But attention has been given to technology and skill development which is positive."

Rajan Aggrawal, Co-Convenor, CII Karnataka Agri and Food Processing Panel 2025-26, Executive Director & CEO, Milltech Machinery Pvt Ltd, said, "The government is encouraging usage of tech in agriculture which will be a good addition to agriculture."

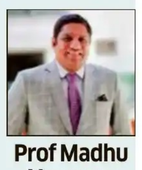
Thyagu Valliappa, Director, Valliappa Software Technological Park Pvt Ltd, said, "With the government focusing on marine from west to east, the cost of transportation will come down extensively. The essence of India lies in the tier two cities and development of seven-eight cities mentioned in the budget will certainly have some benefits. Allocation for training and skill development stood up for me."

B Ravi, Head, Market Research, External Affairs, said, "I am very happy as the finance minister has finally committed to the incentive scheme for the construction of equipment industry. This is a commitment that we were expecting."

Dr Vijaybhaskaran, Convenor ,CII Karnataka Healthcare Taskforce 2025-26, COO, Kauvery Hospitals, said, "The most impressive initiative is the skilling of one lakh people in the healthcare industry which will add lots of value as shortage of staff is one of the major problems of the industry."

'Nuanced commitment to fiscal discipline'

Speaking about the impact of the union budget on education, Prof Madhu Veeraraghavan Pro Vice Chancellor MAHE Bangalore campus, said, "The Union Budget 2026–27 underscores a nuanced commitment to fiscal discipline, reaffirming the government's resolve to anchor macroeconomic stability even as India navigates ambitions of rapid growth and structural transformation."



Prof Madhu Veeraraghavan.

In quantitative terms, the fiscal deficit for FY 2025–26 is estimated at 4.4% of GDP, with a further targeted reduction to 4.3% in FY 2026–27.

This trajectory reflects adherence to a consolidation path set out in earlier budgets and embedded in the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management framework, which mandates progressive reduction in deficits to ensure sustainable public debt dynamics, he added.

Budget very disappointing, holds nothing for state, says CM

'Not even a letter about Upper Bhadra Project'

BENGALURU, DHNS

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday slammed the Union Budget 2026-27 as "very disappointing" and described it as lacking "foresight."

Addressing a news conference in Kalaburagi, the chief minister said: "Nothing has been given to Karnataka, they have given a 'chombu.' They have assured two high-speed trains linking Bengaluru and Hyderabad and Bengaluru and Chennai in five years. More than us, those in AP, Hyderabad and Chennai will benefit from it. We wanted high-speed trains linking Bengaluru with Mumbai, Pune and Mangaluru."

Siddaramaiah, who also holds the finance portfolio in the state, raised his long-standing argument seeking higher share in tax devolution. He rued that Karnataka was getting only 41% though it had sought 50% share in vertical tax devolution.

"We had asked for at least 50%. When Modi was the Gujarat CM, he asked 50%. However, they are merely giving 41%. As per the 14th Finance Commission, Karnataka got 4.71%, but this reduced to 3.64% in the 15th Finance Commission. Now, it's 4.131%. We argued before the 16th Finance Commission that we should at least get what was mentioned in the 14th Finance Commission. If you don't give even as much as the promise by the 14th Finance Commission, it's a big injustice to Karnataka."

Providing corresponding figures for other states, he explained that Bihar was getting 9.948% and Uttar Pradesh was getting 17.931% of the Budget share as per the 16th Finance Commission's recommendations.

"Even Andhra Pradesh, a smaller state, is getting 4.217%. We are not saying that you shouldn't give to other states. But give it to us also."

The chief minister also pointed out that the Budget did not fulfil the state's requests regarding irrigation projects.

"We had sought irrigation projects. There's not even a letter about it. We had sought national project status for the Tungabhadra scheme, Upper Krishna projects. For the Upper Bhadra project, Nirmala Sitharaman assured Rs 5,300 crore in the Budget 2023-24. Not even a single rupee has been given in three years. TN's petition to the Supreme Court was cancelled but they (Union government) have not cleared Mekedaatu."

Specifically referring to the backward Kalyana Karnataka region, Siddaramaiah explained that his government had provided Rs 13,000 cr grants to the Kalyana Karnataka Regional Development Board (KKRDB) after coming to power.

"We are providing Rs 5,000 cr each year (to KKRDB) and sought matching grants but there's no mention of that," he lamented.

Minister Shivaraj Tangadagi holds mike to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah at a press meet in Kalaburagi airport on Sunday. DH PHOTO/TAJUDDIN AZAD

DK, Udupi dists witness surge in tourist footfall

MANGALURU, DHNS: Dakshina Kannada (DK) and Udupi districts have been witnessing an increase in tourist footfall over the past few years. In 2025, Dakshina Kannada registered 6,53,39,542 domestic tourists and 6,115 foreign tourists.

In 2024, Dakshina Kannada received 5.07 crore tourists, including 6,448 foreign nationals, while Udupi recorded 5.78 crore tourists, of whom 77,312 were foreigners. In 2023, Dakshina Kannada saw 3.28 crore tourists (7,875 foreigners) and Udupi recorded 4.74 crore tourists (41,236 foreigners).

According to stakeholders from the industry, tourists visit DK and Udupi for spiritual destinations, pristine and serene beaches, adventure and maritime activities, scenic landscapes, wellness and eco-tourism, and the region's rich traditions of cuisine, craft and culture. Though Coastal Karnataka is attracting a large number of tourists, it is still considered underdeveloped and holds immense potential for the growth of the tourism and hospitality sector.

As per data from the Tourism Department, the Kukke Subrahmanya Temple recorded the highest footfall with 1,60,12,150 pilgrims followed by Shree Kshethra Dharmasthala with 1,17,39,480 pilgrims.

Among the beaches, Panambur topped the list with 46,41,590 tourists followed by the Someshwara Beach with 43,38,000 visitors. The Sulthan Bathery watchtower attracted 5,58,550 tourists, while the Postcard Collection Centre at Pandeshwar recorded 5,540 visitors.

Beach tourism promoter Yathish Baikampady said the lack of infrastructure in line with the growth of the tourism sector was one of the major challenges.

It's people-friendly, promotes commercial crops of Karnataka, says Ashoka

'Sitharaman's budget has not imposed taxes like the Congress govt'

BENGALURU, DHNS:

Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka on Sunday hailed the Union government's 2026-27 Budget as "people-friendly," adding that the Union government "had not imposed taxes like the Congress government..."

Addressing reporters during a news conference, Ashoka said: "The 9th Budget presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is more of a people-friendly budget than a popular one. She has responded to the everyday problems in people's lives. Building hostels for girls in every district by the central government is a first-time initiative, which will emphasize women's education."

Speaking specifically about Karnataka, the LoP felt the Budget will "encourage" the cultivation of sandalwood. "Coconut is cultivated in large-scale in areas like Kolar, Tumakuru, Mysuru, and Malnad regions. This crop will receive international-level encouragement. In recent years, farmers' income has been declining. Several measures have been taken to increase their income," Ashoka said.

He also favoured the decision to introduce high-speed rain corridors between Bengaluru and Hyderabad and Bengaluru and Chennai.

"Bus travel from Bengaluru to Hyderabad takes more time. For that, a high-speed rail project has been provided. Under this project, high-speed rail corridors will be developed between Hyderabad and Bengaluru, and between Chennai and Bengaluru. The high-speed railway corridor will accelerate economic activities. It will create employment opportunities. This is the true brand Bengaluru."

Training his guns at Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who will present his record-extending 17th Budget in around a month, Ashoka said: "CM Siddaramaiah has imposed taxes in the Budget on items for which the central government had reduced taxes. He has imposed new taxes worth Rs 56,000 crore rupees. He will do the same in the upcoming Budget he is going to present. The government has not provided Rs 5,000 crore for the Gruha Lakshmi scheme, Rs 954 crore to Anganawadis, and Rs 36,000 crore to contractors are pending."

Until now, Karnataka had maintained fiscal discipline, but Siddaramaiah has "spoiled" it, he said.

Woman killed, househelp ends...

Murder-suicide, from Page 1

"Investigations are in progress to ascertain whether the suspect murdered the woman and then died by suicide or whether there was anyone else involved. An autopsy will reveal the cause of death. Forensic teams are at the spot," Banoth said.

Police sources said the woman's husband returned home early Sunday morning from Dubai and rang the bell. His daughter, who was sleeping on the first floor, opened the door. "The husband entered the room on the ground floor and discovered the crime scene where his wife was lying lifeless, and the house help had died by suicide. Prima facie, it appears she was strangled, but an autopsy report is awaited, which will also conclude if there was any sexual assault before the murder. The investigators are also checking the background of the house help and are ascertaining if he had any priors," the sources said.

Both bodies have been moved for autopsy procedures. The jurisdictional Mico Layout police have registered a case, and further probe is on.

HATCHING TIME

Olive Ridley sea turtle hatchlings head towards the sea soon after breaking their eggs on Devbagh beach, Karwar, on Sunday. PHOTO: SHANAWAZ KADAPA

Karnataka's share of central taxes up, to get Rs 63k cr

K'taka's share, from Page 1

The Karnataka government has been demanding that it should get a share higher than 4.71%, citing a loss of around Rs 80,000 crore.

Incidentally, states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and 10 other states, including several in the north-east, saw their share decreasing compared to the previous Finance Commission recommendation.

Out of every Rs 100 distributed among states, Karnataka will get Rs Rs 4.13 while Uttar Pradesh will get Rs 17.61, Bihar Rs 9.94, Madhya Pradesh Rs 7.34, West Bengal Rs 7.21, Maharashtra Rs 6.44 and Rajasthan Rs 5.92.

Uttar Pradesh -- whose share declined from 17.93% to 17.61% -- will get Rs 2.68 lakh crore in the next fiscal while it is Rs 1.51 lakh crore for Bihar and Rs 1.12 lakh crore for Madhya Pradesh, Rs 1.10 lakh crore for West Bengal and Rs 90,445.85 crore for Rajasthan.

Among the south Indian states, Tamil Nadu's share has risen from 4.07% to 4.09%, Kerala 1.92% to 2.38%, Andhra Pradesh 4.04% to 4.21% and Telangana 2.10% to 2.17%. Andhra Pradesh will get Rs 64,362.16 crore in 2026-27, Tamil Nadu 62,530.65 crore, Kerala Rs 36,355.39 crore and Telangana Rs 33,180.78 crore.

The Finance Commission report was appreciative of Karnataka for exhibiting strong fiscal autonomy, rooted in diversified economic bases with industry and services making substantial contributions to their GSDPs.

"At 80% in 2023-24, Telangana and Haryana report the highest proportions of own revenues in total receipts and exhibit the lowest reliance on devolution and grants (including the Union government's contribution to the CSS). Karnataka (75.7%) and Maharashtra (75.1%) also exhibit strong fiscal autonomy, rooted in diversified economic bases with industry and services making substantial contributions to their GSDPs," it said.

Bullet train corridors aim Bengaluru-Chennai travel in...

Bullet trains, from Page 1

Similarly, Pune-Mumbai travel time will be 48 minutes, Pune-Hyderabad one hour and 55 minutes, Delhi-Varanasi three hours and 50 minutes, and Varanasi-Patna-Siliguri two hours and 55 minutes.

"Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad are big economies and major cities. They will form a high-speed rail diamond or triangle, which will create a growth multiplier in south India. It will be a great boon for the entire country," he noted.

"Details on alignment and stations will be disclosed after three months," he added.

The Centre will invest Rs 15,000 crore in the National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL) in the coming fiscal.

India's first bullet-train project — the 508-km Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) corridor — is being constructed using Japanese Shinkansen technology.

The Mysuru-Bengaluru leg appears to have been left out of the bullet train project, apparently due to feasibility constraints.

For the original Mysuru-Bengaluru-Chennai project (435 km), the NHSRCL had commissioned a final alignment design, including aerial LiDAR survey.

The helicopter-based LiDAR survey, conducted at a cost of Rs 8.64 crore, collected detailed topographic data.

Eleven stations were proposed, including four in Bengaluru and two in Kolar.

In Bengaluru, stations were proposed at Kengeri, Electronics City, Baiyappanahalli and Whitefield.

In Kolar, the stations were proposed in Malur taluk and about 5 km from Kolar town towards Mulbagal.

With the Mysuru leg excluded, Bengaluru may get only two stations, including Majestic and Whitefield.

In July 2024, the Kolar district administration conducted a stakeholders' meeting on the project's social and environmental impact.

A senior state government official who attended the meeting told *DH*: "A basic survey was conducted to assess land requirements, route alignment and other details. We conducted a meeting with landowners and other stakeholders. Tenders were later floated to prepare the Detailed Project Report (DPR)."

The Bengaluru-Hyderabad corridor is expected to improve connectivity between the two IT hubs, where passengers have long complained of inadequate train links.

Bullet train projects have long gestation periods due to land acquisition hurdles, technical challenges and financing challenges. They run on dedicated tracks that are fenced to prevent unauthorised access.

The 508-km Mumbai-Ahmedabad corridor, approved in May 2014, had achieved only 55% physical progress as of October 2025. Its deadline has now been revised to December 2029.

Going by when the Centre approves the DPR for the new corridors, groundwork may start only in 2027 or later.

The choice of the Bengaluru-Chennai and Bengaluru-Hyderabad routes has drawn criticism, with critics arguing that they would largely benefit other states.

They say the Bengaluru-Pune route should have been included as it would serve large parts of Karnataka.

FM Budgets for 'New Economy'

FM Budgets, from Page 1

"The committee will prioritise areas to optimise the potential for growth, employment and exports," the finance minister said.

India targets to emerge as a global leader in services, with a 10% global share by 2047.

The finance minister also announced a comprehensive review of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) to create a more contemporary user-friendly framework for foreign investors.

Capital expenditure (capex) of the Central government is proposed to be increased to Rs 12.2 lakh crore in 2026-27, around 9% higher from Rs 11.2 lakh crore budgeted for the current financial year. Allocations to defence and railways have been significantly boosted.

High-speed rail corridors will be developed in all four directions of the country in line with the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project. Bengaluru will be connected to Hyderabad and Chennai through bullet trains. Other cities, which are proposed to be connected through the corridors are Pune, Delhi, Varanasi and Siliguri.

"The Budget reinforces confidence in India's growth story at a time when global economic conditions remain uncertain and investment decisions are increasingly driven by policy clarity and long-term predictability," said Rajiv Memani, President, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Technology, manufacturing and reforms dominated Sitharaman's 85-minute budget speech, which was delivered in Parliament for the first time on a Sunday.

Despite Assembly elections due in several states, including West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the finance minister chose to stick to the fiscal glide path. Fiscal deficit, the amount by which the Union government's expenditure exceeds its revenue, is proposed to be reduced to 4.3% of GDP in FY27 from the estimated 4.4% in the current financial year.

Debt-to-GDP ratio is proposed to be lowered from 56.1% in the current financial year to 55.6% in the fiscal beginning April 2026 and further to 50% by 2030-31.

Sitharaman claimed that India's economic trajectory has been marked by stability, fiscal discipline, sustained growth and moderate inflation. "This is the result of conscious choices we have made, even in times of heightened uncertainty and disruption," she said.

She added the government has "decisively and consistently chosen action over ambivalence, reform over rhetoric and people over populism".

PM Narendra Modi said the Budget would give a fresh momentum to the reform push. "This is such a unique Budget in which there is a focus on reducing the fiscal deficit and controlling inflation, and along with this, there is a coordination of high capex and high growth in the budget."

However, the Opposition criticised the Budget, terming it disappointing and lacking substance. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said the Budget "does not provide a single solution to India's many economic, social, and political challenges".

"Youth without jobs. Falling manufacturing. Investors pulling out capital. Household savings plummeting. Farmers in distress. Looming global shocks - all ignored," Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi posted on X.

DH Classifieds

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PERSONAL
Change of Name

I, SRI GOWRI KADABA GURUPRASAD, residing at TUMAKURU-572219 have changed my name as SHREEGOWRI KADABA GURUPRASAD, vide affidavit dated 31/01/2026 before Notary K.S.Bammappanavar, Bengaluru

Ramleela tragedy: Ravan loses eye to Ram's arrow in UP

LUCKNOW, DHNS: Tragedy struck at a "Ramleela" (dramatic enactment of Lord Ram's life) at the Khera village in Uttar Pradesh's Sonbhadra district recently when an arrow hit one of demon king Ravana's eyes during his battle with Lord Ram, reportedly resulting in loss of eyesight.

The incident came to light on Saturday when Sunil Kumar, who played the role of Ravan, lodged a police complaint, accusing the Ramleela committee of not extending any medical help to him after the incident. According to local reports, the battle between Ram and Ravan was being staged when the incident happened. Sunil fell on the stage after being hit by the arrow.

His family members rushed him to a primary health centre, from where he was referred to a hospital in neighbouring Varanasi, where he lost sight in the left eye despite efforts by doctors. Sunil, who hails from an SC community, later lodged a complaint with the police accusing the organisers of neglect, said the local reports.

Naitik Pandey, who played the role of Ram, said he had aimed at Sunil's crown, but the arrow hit his eye by accident. A case under the SC/ST Act has been registered, said the police, adding that they were investigating the matter. The local reports said Sunil had been taking part in Ramleela for several years and, almost always played the role of Ravan.

PM Modi should 'step aside', says TMC on Epstein files fallout

KOLKATA, DHNS: The Trinamool Congress (TMC) has demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi "step aside" in the wake of the reference to his meeting with United States President Donald Trump and subsequent Israel visit in 2017 in an email written by late financier and convicted sex-offender Jeffrey Epstein.

The party said the PM's name appearing in the US Department of Justice (DoJ)'s investigative records concerning Epstein was "nothing short of a national humiliation". "In any functioning democracy, even the remotest shadow of association with such depravity demands immediate transparency, accountability, and moral responsibility," said the TMC, adding: "Silence is not an option".

"If there is even a fragment of truth to these disclosures, the only honourable course before the prime minister is to step aside and subject himself fully to scrutiny," posted the TMC on X on Sunday. The Union Ministry of External Affairs on Saturday dismissed the reference to the PM's visit to Israel in Epstein's email as "trashy ruminations by a convicted criminal", adding that the allusions in the email deserved to be rubbished "with the utmost contempt".

The TMC, however, stated that India's dignity, its institutions' sanctity, and the trust of its citizens could not be held hostage to personal power or political convenience.

The reference

The US DoJ on Friday disclosed an extensive cache of investigative records connected to Epstein, placing more than 30 lakh pages of documents, over 2,000 videos, and roughly 1.8 lakh images in the public domain.

They included an email Epstein wrote on July 6, 2017, referencing Modi's first visit to Israel, beginning July 4, 2017. He was the first Indian PM to visit Israel. His visits to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and his meetings with his Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu, de-hyphenated India's relations with Israel and Palestine.

He visited Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian Authority, a few months later.

"The Indian Prime Minister Modi took advice and danced and sang in Israel for the benefit of the US president [sic]," Epstein wrote in an email on July 6, 2017.

The email also referred to a meeting between Modi and US President Donald Trump a few weeks before, and noted: "It worked."

Budget: Metro to get over Rs 2k cr, suburban rail Rs 500 cr

Rs 1,500 cr for PM E-Drive, Rs 500 cr for PM eBus Sewa

BENGALURU, DHNS

Namma Metro is likely to receive over Rs 2,000 crore from the Union government in 2026-27, as construction is set to begin on Phase 3, a source in the know said.

Some of the allocation will also be utilised for Phase 2, of which the Pink Line is still under construction, the person added.

In 2025-26, Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) had received Rs 1,717.62 crore and Rs 4,814.58 crore in 2024-25.

The Union Budget for 2026-27 has allocated Rs 28,740 crore for metro projects across the country. It has also revised the 2025-26 budgetary allocation for metro projects from Rs 31,239.28 crore to Rs 27,450 crore.

The city-wise break-up of allocation for metro projects under the Ministry of Urban Affairs and Housing will be known in the coming days.

This apart, the BMRCL is expected to receive Rs 454.87 crore from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for Phases 2A and 2B (Blue Line, Silk Board Junction-KR Pura-Kempegowda International Airport, 58.19 km). The ADB is lending a total of US$500 million for the BMRCL.

Similarly, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) will provide Rs 393.44 crore, which will be utilised for the Pink Line, in the coming financial year. The AIIB is funding a total of US$335 million.

A view of metro work at Kempegowda International Airport on the Blue Line. DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

The European Investment Bank (EIB) will provide Rs 517.74 crore out of its commitment of €200 million for the Pink Line. Germany's KfW will provide Rs 269.23 crore in 2026-27, out of €340 million it has committed for Phase 2.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) will support the BMRCL with Rs 1,489.34 crore in 2026-27. Its total loan commitment for Phase 2 is ¥48,779 million for Phase 2.

Suburban Rail Project

The Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project (BSRP) has been allocated Rs 500 crore in the coming financial year. The project was allocated Rs 50 crore in 2022-23, Rs 1,350 crore in 2023-24 and Rs 350 crore each in 2024-25 and 2025-26.

In addition, the project will receive Rs 503.7 crore from Germany's KfW, as part of a €370 million loan agreement.

PM E-Drive, a centrally sponsored scheme under which 4,500 electric buses will be deployed in Bengaluru, has been allocated Rs 1,500 crore.

750 electric buses

PM eBus Sewa, another centrally sponsored scheme under which 750 electric buses will be deployed in Karnataka's tier-2 cities, has been allocated Rs 500 crore in 2026-27. The budget has revised down the 2025-26 allocated from Rs 1,310 crore to Rs 300 crore.

A sum of Rs 24,626.20 crore has been allocated for Rapid Rail Transit System (RRTS) projects. The Centre plans to develop RRTS lines on Bengaluru-Mysuru, Bengaluru-Tumakuru and Bengaluru-Hosur routes.

CJ Roy's death: SIT has begun probe, says Parameshwara

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Bengaluru police has begun investigating the circumstances behind the death by suicide of C J Roy, founder-chairman of the Confident Group, Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Sunday.

"It will be speculation and not definite information if I comment now without the completion of the probe. We have to wait for now," Parameshwara said.

It has been 48 hours since Roy shot himself to death at his office inside the Confident Group's building in Langord Town off Hosur Road.

A team of IT officials were on the premises when the incident occurred. Police are yet to conclude what led to Roy taking the extreme step.

Sources said that SIT has asked Income Tax (IT) officials, who were investigating and present on the premises, when Roy died, to remain in the city, in case they need information from them.

Meanwhile, Roy's body was handed over to his family following autopsy procedures at the Bowring Hospital in Bengaluru. He was then laid to rest.

Govt trying to bury case: BYV

Meanwhile, BJP state president B Y Vijayendra has accused the ruling Congress of attempting to bury or mishandle the C J Roy death case by handing over the case to special investigation team (SIT), reports *DHNS* from Shivamogga.

Speaking to reporters here on Sunday, Vijayendra said, "The family members of deceased realtor Roy have not lodged any complain nor have sought a SIT probe into it. The government appointed the SIT based on the complaint lodged by John, said to be a close aide of Roy. The 'Siddaramaiah Special Investigation team' buried the Chinnaswamy stadium stampede case. Now, it is out to bury Roy's death will bury the case," he charged.

Siblings killed in road mishap

NAGAMANGALA (MANDYA DIST), DHNS: Two people were killed on the spot and three others injured when the car they were travelling collided with a tipper lorry, on Chamarajanagar-Jewargi national highway, in Nagamangala taluk, Mandya district, on Sunday morning.

The two deceased are siblings Maveena (20) and her brother Shyam (21), children of Ravindraraj Krishna, residents of Kathriguppe in Bengaluru. Hithashri, Kalashri and Chetan are the other three injured.

According to sources, all the five from Bengaluru, said to be relatives, were bound to Kotebetta in Nagamangala taluk to participate in a fair, when the mishap occurred.

The person driving the car lost control over the vehicle and rammed against the tipper lorry from behind, killing the siblings on the spot.

DAIVA AND DEVOTION

A devotee performs the 'Kalkuda Kola' ritual, at Thottama, in Udupi on Sunday. PTI PHOTO

Labour codes will push workers into slavery, says former SC judge

BENGALURU, DHNS

Expressing his disapproval of the Supreme Court's recent remarks on trade unions, former Supreme Court Judge V Gopala Gowda sought to emphasise the crucial role that unions essayed in safeguarding the rights and dignity of workers.

At a workers' convention organised by the All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU) as part of its campaign for a General Strike on February 12th to press for the repeal of the new 'anti-worker' Labour Codes, Justice Gowda said that the apex court had failed to acknowledge the contribution of domestic workers.

"Although it is labour that is driving the country, the Supreme Court has failed to stand by workers," he rued.

The new Labour Codes, the former Supreme Court Judge opined, was aimed at turning workers into pawns, by depriving them of minimum wages, job and social security. Compelling the government to withdraw the Labour Codes called for a workers' struggle along the lines of the protest that the farmers staged on the borders of New Delhi seeking the repeal of the black farm laws, Gowda added. "The Labour Codes will push workers into a state of slavery," he said.

Justice Gowda and Karnataka secretary of AICCTU Maitreyi Krishnan are both members of the committee constituted by the Kerala government to draft a set of 'pro-worker' laws as an alternative to the Labour Codes.

AITUC too slams apex court's observation

The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) also slammed the Supreme Court's observations.

"This observation starkly exposes the class character in judicial reasoning, which is detrimental to the ideals of socialist democracy enshrined in the Constitution," stated the AITUC, demanding the withdrawal of the remarks.

"These observations of the Supreme Court coupled with its refusal to entertain a plea seeking minimum wages for domestic workers, are deeply concerning, profoundly disturbing and inconsistent with the constitutional mandate of social justice, equality, and dignity of labour," read the AITUC's statement.

Pennaiyar river: SC to deliver verdict on forming tribunal today

TN had declined to attend meeting at ministers' level

NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court is scheduled to pronounce its judgment on Monday, February 2, 2026 on a suit filed by the Tamil Nadu government to set up a water dispute tribunal to resolve in respect of Pennaiyar river.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and N V Anjaria on December 19, 2025 wrapped up the hearing as the Centre submitted no consensus could be arrived at amicably resolving the disputes among the riparian states. Pennaiyar is an inter-state river. Karnataka is upper riparian and Tamil Nadu, lower riparian.

Karnataka sought one more attempt for holding the talks. Tamil Nadu has filed a complaint under Section 3 of the Act of 1956, complaining that various projects taken by Karnataka across the main Pennaiyar River and its tributary River Markandeya have prejudicially affected or are likely to affect the interests of the downstream state of Tamil Nadu and its inhabitants.

Karnataka, opposing the contention, submitted that out of the total water of 11.77 tmc in the catchment of Karnataka, the state has planned utilisation of 9.77 tmc, leaving 2 tmc and surplus water to Tamil Nadu, which it submitted as sufficient to meet the requirements of Tamil Nadu.

Under section 4(1) of the Act of 1956, a tribunal can be constituted for the resolution of the inter-state water dispute, provided that the Union government is of the opinion that the dispute cannot be resolved by negotiations. Hence, in order to facilitate negotiation, the Union government twice constituted negotiation committees. However, the dispute remained unresolved.

On January 2, 2025, the Union government submitted an affidavit stating that it desired to call a meeting at the ministers' level. Accordingly, a meeting was called on March 18, 2025; however, Tamil Nadu declined to attend, alleging that no purpose would be served, and sought the constitution of a tribunal. Additional Solicitor General, Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Union government, submitted that if the riparian states have refuse to negotiate, the Centre cannot call for a meeting.

On behalf of Tamil Nadu, senior advocate V Krishnamurthy, senior advocate, submitted that a time has arisen for the issuance of mandamus to constitute a tribunal since talks have failed despite two negotiation committees attempting to resolve amicably.

Senior advocate Mohan Katarki, assisted by Advocate on Record Nishant Patil, submitted that one more opportunity should be given to states to resolve the water dispute by negotiation by holding an inter-State meeting at the ministers' level as originally suggested by the Centre in the affidavit. He also submitted that the dispute is too small to warrant any cognisance or adjudication by a tribunal.

The bench, after hearing the arguments, had reserved the verdict.

India to promote high-value plantation crops like coconut, cocoa & cashew

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Focusing on high-value plantation crops grown mostly in southern India, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday announced the launch of schemes to promote coconut, cocoa, cashew, and sandalwood. The initiatives aim to diversify farm outputs, increase productivity, and create new employment opportunities.

Pointing out that India was the world's largest producer of coconuts, Sitharaman noted that about 3 crore people — including nearly 1 crore farmers — depend on it for their livelihood. "To further enhance competitiveness in coconut production, I propose a Coconut Promotion Scheme to increase production and enhance productivity through various interventions, including replacing old and non-productive trees with new saplings, plants, or varieties in major coconut-growing states," she said.

The minister announced a dedicated programme for Indian cashew and cocoa that aims to make the country self-reliant in production and processing, enhance export competitiveness, and transform them into premium global brands by 2030. The Central government is also expected to partner with state governments to promote sandalwood cultivation and post-harvest processing.

For hilly regions, a dedicated programme will support rejuvenation of old orchards and expansion of high-density cultivation of walnuts, almonds, and pine nuts. Meanwhile, the Tax Collection at Source (TCS) for tendu leaves will be reduced to 2%. Sitharaman also unveiled a comprehensive package for the livestock, fisheries, and high-value agriculture sectors in the 2026-27 Budget, seeking to reduce dependence on traditional crop farming. The government allocated Rs 1,62,671 crore for agriculture and allied activities for 2026-27, up 7.12% from the revised estimate of Rs 1,51,853 crore for 2025-26.

"The emphasis on high-value crops, crop diversification, post-harvest processing, and region-specific programmes for coconut, sandalwood, and nut crops should improve farmer incomes and reduce production risks," said Dhanuka Agritech Limited Chairman M K Dhanuka. The announcement of AI-based platforms like Bharat Vistaar, which will provide customised advisories in local languages, was particularly encouraging, he added.

60.7% of Western Ghats susceptible to landslides: IIT-Dharwad study

'Uttara Kannada district accounts for nearly 30% of all landslides recorded in the region'

SRINIDHI R
DHARWAD, DHNS

About 60.7% of the ecologically fragile Western Ghats region spread across seven districts of Karnataka is susceptible to landslides, according to a new study by the Indian Institute of Technology–Dharwad (IIT-Dh). The region has witnessed more than 1,200 landslides over the past two decades.

The study was initiated in the aftermath of the devastating Shirur landslide in Ankola taluk in 2014, which claimed eight lives. It was carried out using hydrological, geographical, and topographical data.

The findings show that Uttara Kannada district accounts for nearly 30% of all landslides recorded in the region, with over 500 incidents in the last 20 years. This is followed by Shivamogga (17.8%), Chikkamagaluru (17%), Kodagu (13.88%), Dakshina Kannada (9.63%), Hassan (8.26%), and Udupi (4%).

Speaking to *DH*, Associate Professor Amarnath Hegde of the Civil and Infrastructure Engineering Department, IIT-Dh who is the principal investigator of the study along with research scholar Malay Pramanik, said that three major factors trigger landslides in the Western Ghats - heavy monsoon rainfall exceeding 3,000 mm annually, the presence of clayey loam soil, and steep slope gradients of over 28 degrees.

"These findings were validated using the Shirur landslide case, which recorded over 3,000 mm rainfall, had clayey loam soil, and a slope gradient of 31 degrees," Prof Hegde said.

He pointed out that traditional drainage patterns that existed for centuries have been choked, obstructing the natural flow of water. Several infrastructure projects, including the expansion of National Highway, have been executed in an unscientific manner, he added.

"In many road projects, the toe of the slope has been cut without constructing proper gabion walls, which are essential as they are porous and allow water percolation," he said.

The landslide susceptibility mapping was carried out using a hybrid approach that combined historical landslide data with diverse geospatial datasets of causative factors. A case study of the 2024 Ankola landslide was also incorporated to validate the model.

The report concludes that rainfall, slope, and soil type are the primary factors influencing landslide susceptibility in the Western Ghats. Regions receiving more than 3,000 mm of annual rainfall, comprising clayey loam soil and slope gradients exceeding 28 degrees, are particularly vulnerable.

Anthropogenic activities such as unregulated slope cutting, land-use changes, and unscientific construction near highways have further aggravated the risk.

Responding to a query, Prof Hegde said his team plans to undertake advanced research using machine learning techniques to predict high-risk landslide zones for the years 2050 and 2100. The findings are expected to be published within the next two months, he said.

A DH file photo of landslide on National Highway-66 at Shirur in Ankola taluk of Uttara Kannada district.

DECCAN HERALD
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Short on ambition, safe in approach

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her ninth consecutive budget amid unprecedented global headwinds and what presents as a collapse of the world order. In this gloomy picture marked by a rethink of geo-economic alliances, India can count its achievements – benign retail inflation, real economic growth rates above the global average, narrowing current account deficit, a sustained increase in forex reserves, and a commitment to fiscal consolidation. The stock markets were quick with their verdict. The key headline indices ended some 2% down, giving a thumbs-down largely on an increase in the securities transaction tax in F&O operations. But what do the bare numbers tell us?

The GDP for FY 2026-27, estimated at Rs 393,00,393 crore, is 10% higher than the advance estimates for FY 2025-26 of Rs 357,13,886 crore. Capital expenditure as proportion of GDP in 2026-27 is budgeted at 3.1% as in FY 2025-26. The revenue deficit has been left unchanged at 1.5% of GDP. This exposes the underlying vulnerabilities, pointing to the dis-savings of the government, potentially leading to a drag on growth. To put it in other words, the government is unable to contain its revenue expenditure largely because of the structural nature of the spends, indicative of a trap. The persistence of a revenue deficit implies that borrowing continues to finance a portion of the consumption expenditure. Non-tax revenue is budgeted at 1.7% of GDP, as against 1.87% in the revised estimates. Disinvestment proceeds have been budgeted higher at Rs 80,000 crore, a rather optimistic rise from Rs 47,000 crore for the previous year (reduced to Rs 33,837 crore in the revised estimates).

Fiscal continuity gets top billing in a Union Budget that picks restraint over transformative change

The focus has been in line with the recent budgets, drawing on conservative estimates on revenues and spending. Customs duty exemptions have been proposed as part of targeted efforts to ease costs across multiple sectors. There are proposals aimed at easing financial pressures faced by the middle class. While prices of electronic and consumer goods, medicines, EV batteries, and leather products are expected to come down, coffee, imported alcohol, and fertilisers are set to get costlier. A gentle verdict would be to call the Budget an effort that does not drift far off the beaten track, sticking to the basics, and maintaining a prudent approach towards the goals of fiscal consolidation. A fair verdict would be to call this an uninspiring effort. Ask the markets, and they'll call it worse, if seen in the slide in stocks, which was the worst crash seen in six years after a Union Budget presentation.

Women in STEM, jobs must follow

A recent report by a global consultancy has concluded that the participation of females in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Medicine) courses in India exceeds global averages – a welcome finding in a country where female academic choices have traditionally been directed towards "less demanding" disciplines. This is in line with a recent shift in trends. The report said women accounted for about 43% of STEM enrolments in the country, which is an improvement over the previous estimates of around 40%. It has cited multiple State initiatives, such as Vigyan Jyoti and the Pragati scholarship, to underline the government's support for women in STEM. There are references to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and its emphasis on skill-based learning and inclusivity. A change in social attitudes has also accelerated the transition.

But there is another side to this story. A rise in the number of student enrolments does not translate into greater participation of women in STEM jobs. The gaps between academic presence and real employment are stark. Women continue to struggle in finding proportional representation in employment, especially in core engineering and decision-making roles, and research leadership. The report has attributed this to an "unconscious bias and workplace culture, where women in STEM face unequal pay and limited leadership opportunities, work-life balance pressures, lack of mentorship and networking, and restricted access to crucial career progression support". An earlier report by UNESCO has also noted this. It said that though 40% of the students enrolled in STEM higher education were women, they accounted for only 14-27% of STEM professionals in the country. Fewer role models, limited support during life transitions such as marriage or motherhood, deep-rooted social expectations, and, importantly, the lack of gender-neutral career guidance at the formative stages in life have been cited as contributory factors. The report has highlighted findings that validate the impact of this guidance. It has been noted that after receiving counselling on the prospects of STEM careers, the participation of girls in STEM clubs in schools has risen.

Female enrolment in courses is encouraging. Now, policies must lead the transition to rewarding jobs

The low representation of women in STEM employment is an extension of the poor labour participation of women in other fields. India's next big challenge will be in removing the barriers and opening up the STEM fields of employment for more women. This will require the formulation of proactive employment policies, strong safety mechanisms in academic institutions and workplaces, and concerted efforts to dispel the biases that prevent women from entering the fields of their choice.

STABILITY TEST

A budget of caution, with no hard reform

It stays prudent in its fiscal and skilling orientation, but stops short of the big push for private sector investment

AJIT RANADE

India's macro backdrop today looks unusually reassuring. Quarterly real growth has been firm, inflation is low, banks are reporting strong profits with low NPAs, and corporate balance sheets look healthier after years of deleveraging. That surface calm, however, is precisely why the Union Budget deserved to be read more as a stress test than as a celebration.

Because some of the "Goldilocks" shine is contingent. Growth momentum has leaned heavily on the Union government's public capex push, which cannot remain the default engine indefinitely without testing debt dynamics. Meanwhile, low inflation has been helped by food-price deflation, which is not permanent. The pre-budget caution signals showed that the output of eight core industries grew only 2.6% year-on-year in April-December FY26.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her record ninth consecutive budget with the theme of cautious pragmatism – trying to keep the fiscal glidepath intact while nudging the economy toward capability-building and growth enhancement. But first, we must examine the budget numbers. Total spending is budgeted to rise to Rs 53.5 trillion, up 7.7% over revised estimates, while revenue (excluding borrowings) is projected at Rs 36.5 trillion, up 7.2%. The fiscal deficit is budgeted at 4.3% of the GDP, consistent with the promise of staying below 4.5%. This restraint matters for credibility – especially in a world where external financing conditions can tighten abruptly and where sovereign perception can affect the cost of foreign capital.

But what about the financing environment? Between the Union government's gross borrowing budgeted at Rs 17.2 trillion and an additional Rs 12.6 trillion of borrowing by states, the bond market faces a flood of issuance. Unsurprisingly, long bond interest rates are stuck at 7% despite substantial easing by the Reserve Bank of India. That becomes a deterrent to private capex.

There is also the issue of tepid revenue buoyancy. The Centre's gross tax revenues grew only 3.3% in April-November FY26, far below the 10.8% growth assumed for the full year. If nominal GDP this year is only 8%, or if consumption stays weak, the best-laid fiscal arithmetic becomes harder to sustain without cutting the very capex that is propping up growth.

On the spending side, the budget keeps the capex bias. Capital spending on infrastructure is budgeted to rise by 9% and reach Rs 12.2 trillion. As long as it remains high-quality capex and does not crowd out private investment, it is okay.

The budget sets an ambitious target of achieving a 10% global share in services – beyond software, extending to content creation, design, health, and tourism. India has a comparative advantage in increasingly tradable services. This will need a productivity leap in skills. Hence,

the budget points to the pipeline from education to employment and enterprise via a proposed standing committee. It also signals a cluster-based industrial approach – linking training institutes to sectoral clusters in textiles and leather and reviving over 200 legacy industrial clusters. This is how employment intensity is built: by improving supplier ecosystems, logistics, standards, and skill pools.

The budget's MSME focus is welcome. Payment delays and working-capital constraints are the silent killers of small firms. Measures such as strengthening bill discounting via TReDS participation are exactly the kind of "plumbing reforms" that raise survival rates and formalisation.

If the Centre's capex push is the visible engine of growth, the private investment response remains the missing cylinder. And here, the budget missed out on a simple but effective reform. That of fixing GST input tax credits – especially for capital goods. Input tax credits on machinery, plant, equipment, and construction inputs get trapped for years, which discourages capacity expansion. Firms accumulate credits that they cannot use. Full tax credit is denied because capital goods enjoy income-tax depreciation. The clean solution is to allow full tax credit on capital goods under GST, while disallowing depreciation on the GST-credited portion. This was a missed reform.

The unlocked investment

Could the budget have been more redistributive? The FM must acknowledge an uncomfortable reality: headline growth and macro stability can coexist with widening inequality, wealth concentration, and a sense of stagnant living standards for large sections – especially when job creation is lagging.

The budget language is heavy on "capability" and "Viksit Bharat", but lighter on distribution: wage growth, the quality of employment, and the channels through which growth becomes broad-based consumption. The employment paradox remains stubborn – too many workers still depend on agriculture despite its much smaller share in output, a structural mismatch linked to wage stagnation and weak mass consumption. If this is not confronted, the political economy risk is predictable: macro narratives will be distrusted, even when technically correct.

Relatedly, household financial savings are barely 30% of total savings. Deepening long-term domestic capital (pensions, insurance, bond-market depth, inflation-protected savings, dispute resolution, and trust in financial products) is necessary. The FM mentioned that a high-level committee will look at comprehensive financial sector reforms.

This is, overall, a sensible budget precisely because it refuses to be euphoric about a Goldilocks moment. It stays conservative on the fiscal maths, keeps capex going, and tries to orient policy towards skills and service-export dominance. But if India's growth model is to become less State-driven and more private-investment-led, the next step cannot be another round of headline schemes. It must be the unglamorous reforms that unclog investment and broaden participation. A push for private sector investment, and a more forthright engagement with inequality and employment quality.

While we build capabilities for growth in the future via skilling and linking clusters to training institutes, we must also ensure that the gains of growth are spread more equitably. The capability-building approach should also substantially raise public spending on healthcare, education, and research. That will happen only when growth pays handsome dividends to the treasury.

(The writer is an economist; Syndicate: The Billion Press)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

The complicated case of Complex

'Let's meet at the Complex' was once a rendezvous phrase

R EDWIN SUDHIR

In the not-so-distant past, between 9th Main and 10th Main in Bengaluru's Jayanagar 4th Block, both broad roads like many others in what was once celebrated as the "largest suburb of Asia", there was barren land. Between them shot up, in 1974, the iconic Jayanagar Shopping Complex, and the 4thblock swiftly became the hub for South Bangalore.

As a *portmanteau* shorthand in millennial times, SoBa never quite acquired the cachet of Mumbai's SoBo, either in social exclusivity or real estate value. But the JSC, aka the Complex, remains to this day and age a magnet which draws curious explorers and veteran visitors.

To the south of the Complex is the BMTC bus stand with the RTO, sundry other offices and much-needed terrace parking. To its north lie the remains of a once-bustling vegetable market, Janata Bazaar, and a Canara Bank branch, among other landmarks. These three commercially vibrant places, along with many other shops, are now silent, empty shells. They were hastily vacated over seven years ago and await demolition. What will come up there is still a matter of much speculation. Prime property lying unused has become home to ferocious cats silently lording it over the ruins. Such apathy defies conventional wisdom. Such a space would have been swiftly built up elsewhere, yet another glass-and-concrete structure changing forever the skyline of Jayanagar.

While 9th Main retains to its west some vestiges of the past, 10th Main is so modern that it has become a garbage interchange. Every morning, mini-vans, which collect polythene packets and other dregs of household waste from nearby lanes, line up here with military precision and feed the large compactor trucks. Contractors and marshals oversee this operation and wave away the bulging trucks onto the next phase of their wasted life.

Left behind are the scraps and stink of rotting garbage. What used to be a pristine street is now studiously avoided, and only those with critical work there venture into this olfactory hell. On the eastern side of 10th Main are chic watch shops and a juice shop that goes back to the Complex's earliest days. They stand mute witness to the fall from grace.

While slow decay and inevitable death are crucial to rebirth and growth, that seems to be taking its own sweet time in the redevelopment of this precious plot. The BDA recently threw its hands up and said it was withdrawing from the project, and it has now become the Bengaluru South City Corporation's baby. The Complex itself needs some urgent repairs, and a recent fire, mercifully minor, was yet another reminder that it needs an urgent infrastructure upgrade.

The Complex and its delightful shops still draw visitors every day by the thousands. But if the area around it can be developed as per plan, whatever it may be, and as per strictly enforced timelines, it could well change the face of 4th Block yet again. 'Let's meet at the Complex' was once a rendezvous phrase. Perhaps it will get a fresh lease of life this year.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Financial investigations should be transparent

Apropos 'Suspicion of money laundering led to raids on Roy' (Feb 1), the reported suicide of C J Roy during ongoing income tax proceedings has cast a sombre light on the manner in which financial investigations unfold. The episode highlights systemic vulnerabilities in political funding, cross-border financial dealings, and regulatory transparency. When serious probes are accompanied by selective leaks and anonymous briefings, public confidence weakens. Investigative agencies must ensure that actions are evidence-based, time-bound, and proportionate, while safeguarding due process and human dignity. This case should prompt deeper institutional introspection rather than episodic outrage. Stronger disclosure norms, scrutiny of overseas remittances, and transparent political finance are essential reforms.

K Chidanand Kumar, Bengaluru

Vital cogs in the wheel

This refers to 'Governance crippled: India's IAS problem' (Feb 1). The article presents a good analysis of the issues plaguing the bureaucracy and the adverse impact on governance due to vacancies in the administrative services and the lack of experienced officers. Though politicians make policies, it is the bureaucracy that provides inputs and direction. As Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel said, 'Independent India needs a steel frame to run its civil, military, and administrative bureaucracy.' The IAS officers are vital cogs in the government wheel, and if the civil services lose their charm, administration could suffer. The central government should prioritise timely transfers and promote awareness among youth about the benefits of a bureaucratic career.

C V Aravind, Bengaluru

Good for water security

Apropos 'BWSSB starts groundwater study ahead of summer' (Jan 31), it is indeed a proactive step by BWSSB to address potential water scarcity. The BWSSB must also address the tepid enthusiasm among consumers to get Cauvery water connections. Educating citizens about the benefits of these connections could reduce dependency on borewells and improve groundwater levels.

H V K Bhatta, Bengaluru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

Fear for Mahatma Gandhi has surfaced after the Congress took up the issue in an organised way. Love for Mahatma has returned, but people know their intentions.

Manickam Tagore, Congress Lok Sabha Whip (On 'Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj' initiative)

Nobody is forgotten when it is convenient to remember him.

Benjamin Disraeli

TO BE PRECISE

IN PERSPECTIVE

India's reading class is shrinking

When work is exhaustive, commutes are long, and phones are an easy distraction, leisure reading becomes a luxury

PALASH BARUAH AND D L WANKHAR

India has long nurtured the image of a "reading society", a civilisation rooted in the written word. We celebrate the chaos of book fairs, obsess over the rigours of curriculum reform, and fret incessantly over the learning outcomes of our youth. Yet, beneath this performative commitment to education, a fundamental pillar of our intellectual life is quietly crumbling – the habit of reading for pleasure.

Recent data from the Time Use Survey (TUS) suggests that leisure reading in India is not going through a change in taste, but rather a crisis of time. Between 2019 and 2024, the percentage of Indians who reported reading for leisure dropped from 5.4% to a mere 4%. While this decline may seem statistically subtle, it represents millions withdrawing from the world of reading leisure books entirely. This is not a passing phase; it is a structural shift that cuts across age, gender, and geography.

The data present a startling contradiction and paradox. Among the shrinking tribe of those who still read, the intensity of the habit has not faded; in fact, women (69.1 minutes a day), children (77.1 minutes), and adolescents (74.5 minutes) are reading for longer durations than they did five years ago. The crisis, therefore, is not that current readers are becoming distracted or they care less. It is that fewer people are managing to remain readers at all.

The erosion is most visible among those in the prime of their lives, i.e., adults between their twenties and fifties. They are spending less time in leisure while grappling with the triple burden of modern Indian life – gruelling work hours, unstable employment, and the soul-crushing toll of urban commuting. For these individuals, leisure reading is no longer a restorative block of time; it is a series of fragments. It is also a worrying sign that the elderly, traditionally the strongest readers, are seeing less participation and less time dedicated to leisure reading between 2019 and 2024.

When leisure fragments, reading, which requires a sustained cognitive deep dive, is the first casualty. It is perhaps being replaced by passive screen consumption, a medium that fits into the exhausted gaps of a workday.

The gender dimension of this decline is particularly revealing. While women spend more time reading (about 69 minutes) than men (57 minutes) when they do find the opportunity, far fewer women now report reading at all (a decline to 2.2% in 2024 from 3.5% in 2019). As unpaid domestic labour and care responsibilities expand, women's leisure reading becomes increasingly fragile and conditional. In today's India, reading survives only among those who can afford uninterrupted personal time, a luxury that remains unequally distributed.

Rural and urban trends tell a story of paradox. While urban residents' participation is more than their rural counterparts, participation has declined in both settings, albeit the fact that rural residents have been averaging about 62 minutes, urban residents' time spent has declined to 59.5%. This suggests that rising work intensity, longer commutes, and digital saturation are shaping daily life in cities.

A public policy of rest

Treating this decline as a mere cultural shift or a failure of moral character misses the point. Reading for pleasure is a critical indicator of cognitive well-being and democratic health. A society that stops reading tends to drift towards fragmented information and polarised, shallow engagement. When the book disappears, the public sphere becomes poorer. If we are serious about building a knowledge economy, we must look beyond school enrolments and digital connectivity.

We must address the structural forces that shrink our leisure reading time. Policies must account for work intensity and the right to disconnect. Multi-hour commutes should not be treated as an invisible part of the day. Libraries and community spaces are vital, but they are useless if the citizenry is too exhausted to use them.

India's reading crisis is not a failure of character, but a failure of structure. We are not a nation losing its curiosity; we are a nation losing its time.

A far greater challenge to leisure reading also comes from the colonisation by short-form video through platforms like Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts, which are engineered to provide dopamine hits in seconds-long intervals. The smartphone has evolved from a tool into an appendage. Because our phones are now our wallets, maps, and offices, they are always in our hands, thereby ensuring that the default choice for a bored mind is a scroll, not a book. Reading competes poorly with platforms designed to exploit fatigue, boredom, and emotional vulnerability.

(Palash is Fellow at the National Council of Applied Economic Research [NCAER], New Delhi; Wankhar is a retired Government of India officer)

25 years after Bhuj, the seismic safety lesson is unfinished

SHAMBHAVI DUBE AND DURGESH C RAI

On January 26, 2001, the Mw 7.7 Bhuj earthquake claimed over 13,000 lives, injured more than 1.5 lakh people, and rendered nearly a million homeless. Entire towns collapsed within minutes. It remains one of the most devastating disasters in independent India's history.

But Bhuj did more than destroy buildings. It shook India's understanding of what "safety" truly means. For the first time at a national scale, the entire chain that produces safe structures—planning, design, detailing, construction, supervision, and emergency functionality—was tested together. What failed was not only concrete and masonry but also the way knowledge moved from codes to drawings, from drawings to construction sites, and from sites to accountability.

Bhuj damaged everything considered "modern": reinforced-concrete buildings, masonry houses, bridges, hospitals, schools, industrial facilities, and lifelines. Across thousands of damaged structures, engineers could directly observe how materials, detailing, configuration, and construction quality behaved under severe shaking. The lesson was unmistakable: seismic safety depends as much on detailing and execution as on calculations. Strength without ductility collapses. Design without enforcement is decoration.

India did not lack technical knowledge before Bhuj. IS 1893 addressed seismic design, IS 4326 construction practices, and IS 13920 (1993) introduced ductile detailing. Earthquake engineering education existed in a few institutions. The problem was reach. Seismic design was treated as an "extra load case", not as a performance philosophy. Detailing rules rarely travelled from codebooks into drawings, bar schedules, and site inspections. Architectural layouts were often finalised before structural safety entered the discussion. Bhuj exposed this gap at scale.

The failures were technically predictable. RC columns failed in shear, joints fractured, confinement was missing, anchorage was inadequate, and soft storeys collapsed. Masonry walls separated from floors and failed out of plane. Industrial facilities failed at anchors and connections. Hospitals and schools lost functionality even when they did not collapse. Codal clauses that once seemed abstract became visible failure mechanisms.

Since 2001, progress has been substantial. Governance shifted from response to prevention. The Disaster Management Act (2005), NDMA guidelines, seismic risk assessments, and rapid screening tools reframed preparedness as a continuous responsibility rather than a post-disaster exercise.

Codes evolved sharply. IS 1893 was revised in 2002, strengthened in 2016, and fundamentally reframed in 2025. The latest edition adopts probabilistic seismic hazard assessment and active fault mapping, introduces Zone VI, and incorporates near-fault effects, liquefaction, soil–structure interaction, and non-structural safety. Yet science must remain buildable: safety that cannot be implemented economically is of little help.

For reinforced-concrete buildings, the deeper transformation came through IS 13920. After Bhuj, especially following the 2016 revision, ductility became mandatory. Capacity design, confinement in hinge zones, joint detailing, controlled lap splices, and boundary elements became enforceable requirements. Supporting codes for retrofit, tall buildings, masonry, and steel completed the shift from force-based checks to mechanism-controlled performance.

Equally decisive was the expansion of experimental capacity. Before Bhuj, testing facilities were limited. After Bhuj, India built a national experimental ecosystem. IITs, IISc, CSIR laboratories, NITs, and state institutions established shake tables, cyclic loading systems, and hybrid simulation facilities. Earthquake engineering moved from paper to proof, allowing codes and retrofit strategies to be validated against Indian materials and construction practices.

Human capital expanded alongside. Earthquake engineering education spread nationwide through new faculty positions, doctoral programmes, and professional training. Continuing education initiatives at IIT Kanpur since the early 1990s and the Government of India-sponsored National Programme on Earthquake Engineering Education (2003-2008) marked a turning point in capacity-building. Platforms like NICEE carried knowledge beyond specialists to engineers, architects, students, and even schoolchildren. Seismic safety entered professional culture.

Post-Bhuj reconstruction also demonstrated the value of global knowledge transfer. Confined masonry—long practised in Latin America—was adapted to Indian conditions. Its consistent performance showed that reinforced masonry can be a safe, economical alternative to RC for low- and mid-rise buildings, now visible in institutional campuses such as IIT Gandhinagar.

Yet, subsequent disasters delivered sobering reminders. The 2004 tsunami exposed vulnerabilities in coastal infrastructure. The 2011 Sikkim and 2015 Gorkha earthquakes revealed fragility in ordinary housing. The 2016 Imphal earthquake was especially troubling: publicly funded buildings performed poorly. The problem was not lack of knowledge but failure of compliance.

This remains India's central challenge. Vulnerability today arises not from absence of codes or research, but from inconsistency in implementation. Municipal review capacity is limited. Approvals often prioritise bylaws over seismic detailing. Proof-checking is uneven. Poor construction quality erodes safety margins assumed by design. The greatest risk lies in existing buildings never designed for ductility.

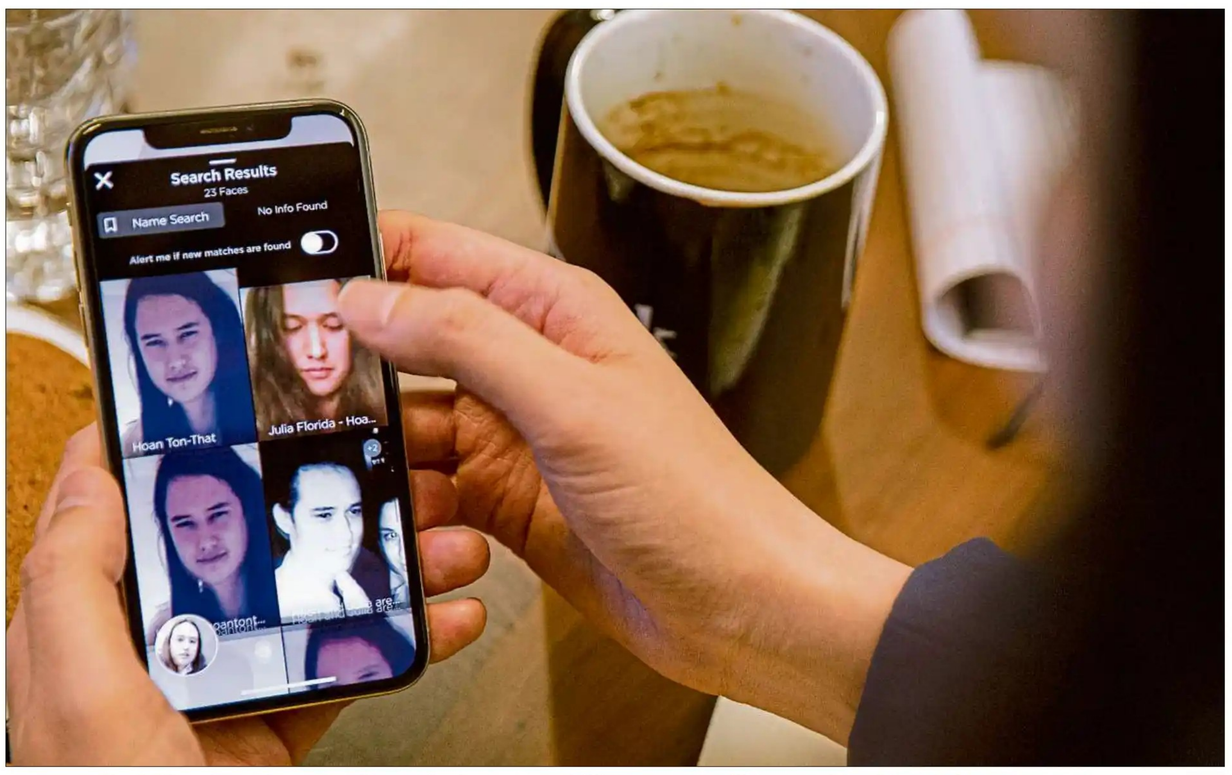
India's next leap must begin with strict compliance in new construction, so unsafe buildings are no longer added to the stock. This requires enforceable review mechanisms, construction-stage quality control, systematic audits and retrofitting of hospitals, schools, and lifelines, and a sustained research-to-practice pipeline in which earthquake lessons continuously update design and training.

Earthquakes are natural. Disasters are engineered. Bhuj still asks one question: when the next major earthquake comes, will India's progress be visible only in documents and laboratories—or in buildings that stand, hospitals that function, bridges that remain open, and communities that recover faster?

(The writers are with the Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Kanpur)

Agents use facial recognition, social media monitoring and other tech tools to identify undocumented immigrants and to track protesters

SHEERA FRENKEL AND AARON KROLIK



The US border enforcement agencies have spent billions on surveillance and tracking tools. THE NEW YORK TIMES

How ICE already knows who Minneapolis protesters are

On the morning of January 10, Nicole Cleland was in her car trailing an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent through Richfield, Minnesota, her hometown.

Suddenly, the agent turned into a series of one-way streets and stopped, getting out of his white Dodge Ram, said Cleland, who volunteers with a local watchdog group that observes the activity of immigration officers. The agent then walked over to Cleland's car and surprised her by addressing her as Nicole.

"He said he had facial recognition and that his body camera was on," said Cleland, 56, who had not met the agent before.

Cleland was one of at least seven American citizens told by ICE agents in January that they were being recorded with facial recognition technology in and around Minneapolis, according to local activists and videos posted to social media, which were verified by *The New York Times*. None had given consent for their faces to be recorded.

Facial recognition is just one technology tool that ICE has deployed in Minneapolis, where thousands of agents are conducting a crackdown. The technologies are being used not only to identify undocumented immigrants but also to track citizens who have protested ICE's presence, said three current and former officials of the Department of Homeland Security who were not authorized to discuss confidential matters.

ICE is using two facial recognition programs in Minnesota, they said, including one made by the tech company Clearview AI and a newer program, Mobile Fortify. The agency is also using cellphone and social media tools to monitor people's online activity and potentially hack into phones. And agents are tapping into a database, built by the data analytics company Palantir, that combines government and commercial data to identify real-time locations for individuals they are pursuing, the current and former officials said.

"The technologies are being deployed, or appear to be deployed, in a much more aggressive way than we have seen in the past," said Nathan Freed Wessler, a lawyer at the American Civil Liberties Union, which has sued the Homeland Security Department over the immigration operation in Minneapolis. "The conglomeration of all these technologies together is giving the government unprecedented abilities."

The Homeland Security Department has not disclosed which technologies immigration agents are using in Minneapolis. A spokesperson said the agency would not detail its methods, adding: "For years law enforcement across the nation has leveraged technological innovation to fight crime. ICE is no different."

The reach of the technologies has raised concerns. In November, Democratic senators including Edward Markey of Massachusetts, Chris Van Hollen of Maryland and Adam Schiff of California asked ICE for more information on its facial recognition software, and asked that it suspend use of the technology in US cities.

ICE has vastly expanded its tech tools over the last year after an influx of cash. In July, President Donald Trump signed a bill increasing ICE's annual budget to roughly $28 billion from $8 billion, making it the most richly funded law enforcement agency in the federal government.

In April, the Homeland Security Department awarded Palantir a nearly $30 million contract to build a system backed by artificial intelligence that would help find and track individuals for deportation. Palantir was due to deliver a prototype by September 25, according to public tenders issued by the agency. The agency has started using the system, two current Homeland Security officials said.

A person familiar with Palantir said the company works with ICE on a database that integrates different information to help agents identify only noncitizens.

In September, the Homeland Security Department also spent nearly $10 million acquiring at least three social media monitoring tools and services that allow it to delve into people's cellphones, according to procurement records and public contracts for the project.

One of the tools, which was built by Paragon, an Israeli technology company, lets people take control of phones or remotely hack into them to read messages or track locations. The others were built by Penlink, a Nebraska-based software company. They use social media data scraped from the Web and information from data brokers to help build dossiers of anyone with a social media account.

Some details of these tools were reported earlier by *404 Media*. Paragon and Penlink did not respond to requests for comment.

ICE's use of facial recognition software was documented in videos and photos from local activist groups in Minnesota in January and reviewed by the *Times*. Two photos captured fatigue-clad agents using cellphones to scan the faces of protesters in Minneapolis, while in one video, agents could be heard telling people that they were being recorded with facial recognition technology and that their faces would be added to a database.

The technology by Mobile Fortify, which was used by ICE officials in Minneapolis, is built on technology that had been created for Customs and Border Protection, the current and former Homeland Security officials said.

A department spokesperson said Mobile Fortify was a "lawful law enforcement tool" and "lawfully used nationwide in accordance with all applicable legal authorities."

In a 2024 agency report, the Homeland Security Department said it used a facial recognition tool from Clearview AI for child exploitation investigations. But in a $3.75-million contract with the company in September, the agency said the tool would also be used to investigate attacks on law enforcement.

A Clearview AI spokesperson said the focus of its contract with the department was supporting investigations into child exploitation and cybercrimes.

ICE is continuing to seek more technology. In January, the agency published a request for information for ways to better acquire and integrate so-called big data and advertising tech into its operations, saying it was "working with increasing volumes of criminal, civil and regulatory administrative documentation from numerous internal and external sources."

The questionnaire asked vendors to describe the types of data they could provide on "people, businesses, devices, locations, transactions, public records." It also asked vendors how their systems could help "identify subjects, entities or locations of interest" and whether people could be searched by identifiers including "name, phone, device, account, location."

Justin Sherman, a distinguished fellow at Georgetown Law's Centre on Privacy and Technology, said the request showed ICE was "doubling down" on buying sensitive data.

Cleland, the Richfield resident, said that three days after the encounter with the ICE agent, she received an email from the Department of Homeland Security saying her Global Entry and Transportation Security Administration travel privileges had been revoked. No explanation was provided.

Cleland said she had swung from anger to fear. "I don't know how far-reaching ICE can be," she said. "I'm struggling to figure out what I can do, without putting myself at greater risk or putting other people at risk."

In January, Cleland signed a declaration joining a lawsuit against the Homeland Security Department in US District Court in Minnesota. The lawsuit challenges ICE's treatment of observers. In her declaration, Cleland asked why her traveller status had been revoked.

"I am a totally average American, and I cannot abide by what is happening right now," she said.

The New York Times

The contributors history forgets

P S PARAMESWARAN

History is not always a fair judge. It tends to remember those who disrupt the order more vividly than those who preserve it and those who provoke conflict more sharply than those who resolve it. As time passes, many who served society with integrity and restraint fade from public memory, while controversial or destructive figures continue to occupy centre stage.

The freedom movement was sustained not only by charismatic mass leaders but also by thousands who worked quietly, organising local networks, educating communities, raising funds, and enduring imprisonment without expectation of recognition. Over time, public memory narrowed itself to a few towering figures, while many others slipped into obscurity.

Lal Bahadur Shastri remains a telling example. As prime minister, he led the country through war and economic stress with humility and moral authority. His call of *Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan* reflected a deep understanding of India's social and economic foundations. Yet his understated leadership is often overshadowed by louder and more polarising political legacies.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's contribution to integrating the princely states into the Indian Union was foundational to the country's survival as a cohesive nation. The task demanded firmness, diplomacy, and extraordinary administrative skill. Without his efforts, India's political map might have remained fragmented. Yet for decades, this achievement did not receive the attention it deserved in public discourse.

South India offers its own examples of such quiet builders. C Rajagopalachari, independent India's first Governor-General, combined intellectual depth with political restraint, often taking unpopular but principled positions. K Kamaraj, remembered for his personal simplicity, reshaped Tamil Nadu by prioritising education and institution-building over political spectacle. Their legacies endure in systems strengthened rather than slogans coined.

Karnataka, too, has benefited from understated leadership. Sir M Visvesvaraya, the engineer-statesman and former Diwan of Mysore, laid the foundations of modern administration, public works, and technical education in the state. The Krishna Raja Sagar dam, the University of Mysore, and a culture of professional governance continue to bear his imprint. His vision was long-term and institution-centric, not driven by immediate popularity. Yet, outside textbooks and commemorative occasions, his contribution rarely enters everyday public discussion, a reminder of how quietly enduring excellence is often taken for granted.

Post-Independence India has seen many similar contributors. Homi Bhabha laid the scientific foundations of India's atomic energy programme. Verghese Kurien transformed rural India through the White Revolution, empowering millions of farmers. E Sreedharan demonstrated that large public infrastructure projects could be delivered efficiently and with integrity. Their work reshaped the nation, yet their stories rarely command sustained public attention.

In contrast, figures associated with conflict, controversy, or disruption tend to dominate debates. Destruction attracts attention more easily than discipline. The human mind remembers shock more vividly than steadiness. This psychological tendency shapes popular culture, public discourse, and media priorities.

The same pattern is visible in everyday life. In offices and institutions, employees often remember the one superior who humiliated or obstructed them long after they forget the manager who encouraged growth, approved promotions, or acted with fairness. Negative experiences leave deeper imprints; positive ones are quietly absorbed and then forgotten.

Media narratives inevitably reflect this bias. Scandals generate headlines; steady governance rarely does. Institutional failures are examined at length, while institutional strength is taken for granted. Over time, this skews collective memory. This is not an argument for ignoring history's darker chapters. A democracy must examine its failures honestly. But balance matters. When public discourse consistently amplifies harm and marginalises service, it distorts societal values.

The common citizen understands this instinctively. He recognises the worth of the honest official who clears files without delay, the teacher who shapes lives without applause, and the engineer who builds systems that simply work. Institutions endure because of such individuals, even if they rarely make news.

The question, then, is not merely whom history records, but whom society chooses to remember. A mature democracy must find space to acknowledge those who held the system together, not only those who shook it.

(The author is an entrepreneur, a qualified corporate director and a freelance writer)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: FEBRUARY 1976

Happy people are co-operating: TN Adviser

Madras, February 1
Tamil Nadu was absolutely calm today, the first day under President's rule, officials said. Life was normal and people carried on their avocations as usual. Being a weekly holiday, people were seen going to the picnic and tourist spots. 'House full' boards were seen at cinema theatres. "We are happy, things are well under control in the state and people are co-operating in maintaining peace and tranquillity," Mr. P. K. Dave, Adviser to the Governor, told pressmen.

25 YEARS AGO: FEBRUARY 2001

2 pc IT surcharge to be levied

New Delhi, Feb 1
The Union Cabinet today decided to promulgate an ordinance levying a surcharge of 2 per cent each on income tax payable by individuals having an income of more than Rs 60,000, and by companies for the accounting year of 2001-2002. The levies are in addition to the existing surcharge. Called the Taxation Laws Amendment Ordinance, 2001, it is expected to garner Rs 1,300 crore, which would be spent on reconstruction of quake-hit Gujarat. Cabinet also decided to amend the IT Act providing 100 per cent tax deduction on donations.

OASIS | KANDASWAMY GNANAMURTHY

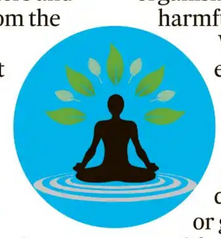
Instincts and emotions as survival needs

There is a thin line between instincts and emotions. The former is primordial, and the latter is an expression and serves the purpose of self-preservation.

While experts argue on what may be included or not on the list of emotions, there is consensus on five emotions.

Joy heads the list: a sense of well-being, contentedness, helping social connection, etc., bringing in relaxation and a certain numbness to potential dangers, unless it is followed by the highest level of Maslow's need of self-actualisation, elevating oneself from the bonds of social needs.

The opposite, which is sadness, a response to loss or inevitability, triggers empathy from others and eventually frees oneself from the clutches of inactivity.



Fear is perhaps the most effective survival drive, to confront or run away. Anger may precede an action, though not always, on perceived injustice and may raise one to very high levels of heralding social justice.

Disgust is also an evolutionary response to things that are unpleasant, offensive, or potentially contaminating. It helps to avoid harm or social violations. Primarily evolved as a protective mechanism, it helps organisms to avoid pathogens and harmful environments.

While there are several more emotions, the one which comes close to disgust but which needs to be fought against is contempt , a sense of superiority complex and disregard for another person or group.

Often described as "looking down on" someone, it typically arises when you perceive others as being beneath your standards. Historically, it is seen that this is more dangerous than killing in wars to extend or protect regional boundaries.

Killing millions of fellow humans, including children, on the basis of racial hatred during the Holocaust, and the apartheid needing great men like Abraham Lincoln to intervene to bring social justice are standing examples that this 'contempt emotion' should be fought against the barriers of colour, creed, ethnicity, nationality, social status, etc.

People exhibiting contempt hurt others, whether in place of work or worship, and are rarely punished unless it is the 'contempt of court'.

Union Budget: No big-ticket sops for election-bound states

Speech sans frills, poetry or invocations of saints

NO ROUTINE TALK

- The minister refrained from making state-specific promises
- The only political statement came from the choice of saree Nirmala wore—a Kanchivaram silk
- The guiding theme for the budget document was Atma Nirbharta

SUMIT PANDE
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Unlike her previous budget speeches that were laced with political messaging for poll-bound states, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday shunned populism and election sops for fiscal prudence to boost job creation and generate sustainable growth amidst global trade turmoil.

In 2025, Sitharam had announced a slew of schemes for Bihar like setting up of Makhana (Fox Nut) Board, a greenfield airport, a canal project and expansion of IIT, Patna.

This time, though, the minister refrained from making state specific promises.

The only political statement, that too sartorial, came from the choice of saree the finance minister wore for the budget speech — a Kanchivaram silk.

Or could it be that the ruling party at the centre does not want to rush into laying bare its cards on the table and has reserved targeted poll promises for the final lap before the elections?

Four states, including Tamil Nadu, Assam, West Bengal, Kerala and one Union Territory, Puducherry, will have Assembly elections in 2026. It was widely expected, like previous years, the government would use the Union Budget to outline a political programme for the poll-bound states and UT.

In yet another departure from her previous Budget presentations, this year's speech was marked by the absence of frills, poetry, or invocations of saints or philosophers.

The underlined theme, if any, was the challenges faced by the country in a fast-evolving external environment in which "trade and multilateralism are imperilled."

The loadstar and guiding theme, thus, for the budget document was Atma Nirbharta or self-reliance that could be achieved by exporting more and "attracting stable long-term investment."

There is another first in this year's Budget. This is the first time the Budget document has got its final touches outside the portals of the North Block atop the Raisina Hill, as key departments of the central secretariat have, in the last one year, been shifted to the newly constructed Kartavya Bhawan as part of the plan to develop the central vista on either side of the road connecting Rashtrapati Bhavan and India Gate.

The minister used the occasion to list the three responsibilities that she said were guiding the economic policies of the government: accelerate and sustain economic growth by enhancing productivity, fulfil aspirations of the people, and ensure every "community and region had access to resources, amenities, and opportunities."

"Our third kartavya aligns with our vision of Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas towards a Viksit Bharat," the minister added.

The underlying inclusive theme of the budget speech, with the minister seeking to build economic consensus amid global uncertainties, was well reciprocated by the opposition as it sat through without intervening or interjecting. The sloganeering, or whatever little happened of it when the PM entered the house, ceased once the LS speaker Om Birla took his seat and proceedings started.

The minister ended her 85-minute speech proposing to revise provisions for baggage clearance and enhance duty-free allowance during international travel.

Combo of file images shows Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with the 'Union Budget' in the years (L-R, Top Row) 2019, 2020, 2021, (Middle Row) 2022, 2023, 2024 (Interim Budget), (Bottom Row) 2024, 2025, 2026. PTI

MHA allocation up 9.44% to Rs 2.55 lakh cr

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) was on Sunday allocated Rs 2.55 lakh crore, a 9.44% increase from 2025-26, with the second phase of border villages development programme earmarked Rs 300.02 crore, the Census operations Rs 6,000 crore and the Intelligence Bureau (IB) witnessing an increase in its share.

A major chunk of the fund allocation went to the paramilitary forces at Rs 1.16 lakh crore, up from Rs 1.09 lakh crore in the Budget estimates of 2025-26. The CRPF, the largest paramilitary force, got Rs 38,517.93 crore while the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) got Rs 11,324.08 crore. BSF got Rs 29,567.64 crore.

Intelligence Bureau's allocation rose from Rs 3,893.35 crore, which was later revised to Rs 4,159.11 crore, to Rs 6,782.43 crore this time.

The allocation is for meeting the administrative expenses of the Intelligence Bureau, which ensures national security by collecting and analysing information on internal threats.

For the second phase of the Vibrant Villages Programme, Rs 300.02 crore has been earmarked. This money is for integrating the border population with the nation by creating better living conditions and adequate livelihood opportunities. This includes infrastructure development in villages and other development works.

Govt doubles electronics component scheme outlay

HYDERABAD, DHNS: In a major boost to India's electronics sector, the Centre will nearly double the outlay of its Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme from Rs 22,919 crore to Rs 40,000 crore. Launched in April 2025, the scheme has already secured investment commitments exceeding its initial targets.

"The scheme has doubled the targets with strong investment commitments. We propose increasing the outlay to Rs 40,000 crore to capitalise on this momentum," Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told the Lok Sabha while presenting the Budget.

The scheme targets key components like display modules, camera sub-assemblies, printed circuit board assemblies (PCBAs), lithium cell enclosures, resistors, capacitors, and ferrites essential for smartphones, laptops, microwave ovens, refrigerators, toasters, and other gadgets.

Sensex, Nifty crash nearly 2% over STT hike

Foreign investors, domestic traders raise concerns

MUMBAI, PTI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty dived sharply by nearly 2% on Sunday, logging their worst decline in six years on a Budget day, after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed a hike in the Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on derivatives.

Reversing the early gains, the 30-share BSE Sensex plunged sharply by 2,370.36 points or 2.88% to slide below the 80,000-mark at 79,899.42 in afternoon trade as the finance minister announced a hike in STT on futures contracts to 0.05% from the current 0.02 %.

The barometer settled at 80,722.94, down 1,546.84 points or 1.88%.

The 50-share NSE Nifty tanked 495.20 points or 1.96% to settle at 24,825.45. During the day, it tumbled 748.9 points or 2.95 % to 24,571.75.

Stock exchanges held a special Budget Day trading session on Sunday in view of the budget presentation by Sitharaman for the next financial year.

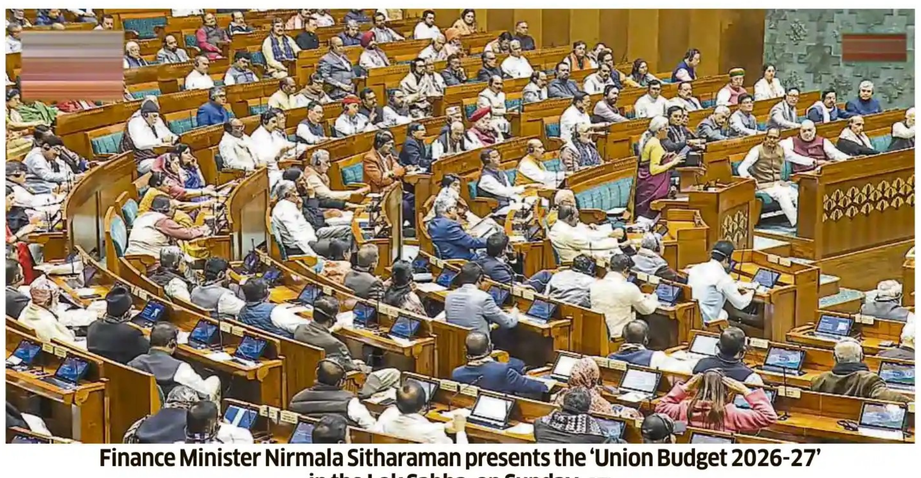
Sensex and Nifty logged their worst decline in six years on a Budget day. Earlier on February 1, 2020, the 30-share BSE benchmark had ended 2.42 % lower, and the Nifty tanked 2.51%.

Investors' wealth eroded sharply by Rs 9.40 lakh crore on Sunday, tracking a sharp decline in equities. Market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies eroded by Rs 9,40,581.75 crore to Rs 4,50,61,658.60 crore (USD 4.90 trillion) in a single day.

"Market unease, however, is centred on the increase in STT on F&O, particularly the sharper hike on futures. This comes on the back of higher capital gains taxes last year, raising overall transaction costs for market participants," Pranav Haridasan, MD and CEO, Axis Securities, said.

Futures are a margined, risk-managed product and not typically the primary source of retail excess, which raises questions on whether higher STT will deliver the desired outcome or instead weigh on liquidity, participation and India's market cost competitiveness, he noted.

"These concerns are being voiced by foreign investors and domestic traders, and are reflected in the immediate market reaction," Haridasan added.



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presents the 'Union Budget 2026-27' in the Lok Sabha, on Sunday. PTI

Mental health in spotlight amid rising burden

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

HEALING STEPS

- Nimhans-2 to be set up in north India; Ranchi and Tezpur institutes to be upgraded
- Emergency and Trauma Care Centres in district hospitals, capacity up by 50%.
- In customs duty relief, 17 anti-cancer drugs exempted
- Health Ministry budget raised to Rs 1,06,530 crore

With a rising mental healthcare burden, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday announced the establishment of a mental healthcare hospital on the lines of Nimhans in north India, the expansion of trauma care facilities in district hospitals and the strengthening of the paramedical workforce to boost the healthcare sector.

She also proposed exempting 17 anti-cancer drugs from basic customs duty and doing away with duties on the personal import of "drugs, medicines and food for special medical purposes" for seven more rare diseases.

"There are no national institutes for mental healthcare in north India. We will therefore set up a Nimhans-2 and also upgrade National Mental Health Institutes in Ranchi and Tezpur as regional apex institutions," she said.

The announcements on new mental health facilities come at a time when an official survey shows that 10.6% of Indian adults, roughly 11 out of every 100 adults, are living with a diagnosable mental health disorder.

According to the 2015-16 National Mental Health Survey conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bengaluru, 15% of India's adult population experiences mental health issues requiring intervention.

The overall allocation for the Health Ministry is pegged at Rs 1,06,530 crore, that is nearly 7% more than last year's budgetary estimate of Rs 99,858 crore.

With the country's disease burden shifting towards non-communicable diseases like cancer, diabetes and autoimmune disorders, Sitharaman proposed a Rs 10,000-crore Biopharma SHAKTI (Strategy for Healthcare Advancement through Knowledge, Technology and Innovation) initiative to build an ecosystem for domestic production of biologics and biosimilars over the next five years.

Ninth in a row: Sitharaman's budget journey

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Presented on a Sunday for the first time, and prepared in a new office but printed at the press in the old one, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday created parliamentary records by presenting her ninth consecutive budget.

Nirmala, India's second woman Finance Minister after Indira Gandhi, had earlier presented the budget on a Saturday twice — in 2020 and 2025. With the 2026-27 budget, she has equalled the record of P Chidambaram, who presented nine budgets, though only five were consecutive.

This is the first time a budget has been presented on a Sunday. It is also the first budget prepared in the new office of the Ministry of Finance at Kartavya Bhavan.

However, the printing of the budget papers was carried out at the press in the basement of the ministry's old office in North Bloc, as the new press installed at Kartavya Bhavan is not yet fully operational.

The quarantine of officials involved in budget preparation and the traditional halwa ceremony marking the start of the final leg of preparations were both held at North Bloc.

If she continues as Finance Minister until at least March 2028, Sitharaman will hold the record for presenting the Budget 11 times.

In 2019, she replaced the leather briefcase — used for carrying budget documents for decades—with a traditional bahi-khata wrapped in red cloth.

She also holds the record for delivering the longest budget speech, in February 2020.

Blind to real crises: Oppn on 'directionless' budget

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Opposition on Sunday pounded on the Narendra Modi government over the "directionless" Budget, with the Congress saying it was "blind to India's real crises" and did "not even offer slogans to hide the absence of policy".

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the government had run out of ideas, and the Budget did not provide a single solution to India's many economic, social, and political challenges, with the "Mission Mode" now becoming a "challenge route".

Kharge said there was "no policy vision, no political will", even as farmers awaited meaningful welfare support or an income security plan, and inequality had "surpassed the levels seen under the British Raj".

He also claimed the Budget did not provide any support to SC, ST, OBC, EWS, and minority communities.

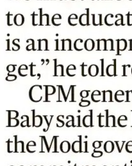
Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said, "Youth without jobs. Falling manufacturing. Investors pulling out capital. Household savings plummeting. Farmers in distress. Looming global shocks - all ignored. A Budget that refuses course correction, blind to India's real crises."

Congress MP P Chidambaram told reporters that none of the challenges identified in the Economic Survey, including those posed by US tariffs and the growing trade deficit with China, were addressed in the Budget speech. "Our verdict is that the... Budget fails the test of economic strategy and economic statesmanship," the former finance minister said.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said the budget was meant for the "top 5%" of the population. "If things continue like this, we will have to make jewellery by plating brass over iron. This Budget is beyond understanding. The basic issues—education and health—have been ignored. If we truly want to dream of a developed India, we must allocate much more to the education sector. This is an incomprehensible Budget," he told reporters.

CPM general secretary M A Baby said the Budget exposed the Modi government's "blind commitment" to a few big corporate houses at the expense of the working people and the larger national interest.

AKHILESH YADAV
Samajwadi Party chief



"If things continue like this, we will have to make jewellery by plating brass over iron. This Budget is beyond understanding. The basic issues—education and health—have been ignored

Balancing growth, inclusion and global headwinds

KUNWAR MILIND SINGH

In the wake of ever-evolving geopolitical changes, Budget 2026 continues the government's consistent strategic focus on economic reforms. These include consolidating the fiscal situation, sustaining capital spending, advancing reforms in both direct and indirect taxation, and channelising private sector investment.

These priorities can be achieved through sustained structural reforms, mobilising savings and allocating capital efficiently, leveraging cutting-edge technology including AI applications, and building a resilient, robust financial sector that will serve as a force multiplier for effective governance.

The fiscal consolidation efforts are expected to reduce government borrowing, freeing up sufficient funds for the social sector, infrastructure spending and other development priorities.

On the monetary front, a high-level committee on banking sector reform has been proposed to examine the entire gamut of the sector.

It is likely to look into the credit-to-GDP ratio, the credit-deposit expansion ratio, and people's access to banking services.

The concern that private sector investment is not picking up in the economy was addressed through a sectoral focus. The government has allocated Rs 40,000 crore for electronics component manufacturing in FY27, while semiconductor manufacturing has received a boost with the launch of Semiconductor Mission 2.0.

Neutralise tariffs

To boost exports, duty exemptions on imports have been extended across different industries, reducing the cost of imported inputs and making Indian exports more competitive. This measure is expected to neutralise the heavy tariffs recently imposed by the US on multiple sectors.

A major takeaway from the budget is the proposal to review the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) as part of India's capital account in the balance of payments. The move signals that capital flows in the economy may be liberalised going forward, reflecting the resilience of India's macroeconomic environment.

(The writer is an Associate Professor at Lal Bahadur Shastri Institute of Management, Delhi)

Aircraft component imports get significant duty exemptions

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday announced an exemption of basic customs duty in the Union Budget on components required for the manufacture of civilian, training, and other aircraft, as well as raw materials the defence sector imports for the manufacture of parts to be used in aircraft maintenance, repair, or overhaul.

These are part of the tax reforms she unveiled to boost the manufacturing sector, and are effective from Monday.

The announcement came days after the Adani Group and Brazilian aerospace corporation Embraer announced a partnership to set up a regional aircraft manufacturing facility in India, as well as a collaboration on opportunities in supply chain, aftermarket services, and pilot training.

On the manufacturing of civilian, training, and other aircraft, budget documents showed the exemption was being given to components or parts provided the importer adhered to the procedures set out in the Customs (Import of Goods at Concessional Rate of Duty or for Specified End Use) Rules, 2022.

Regarding the exemptions given to the defence sector, they said they were for raw materials used in the manufacture of aircraft parts for maintenance, repair, or overhaul of aircraft or their components, provided the goods were imported by public-sector units under the Union Defence Ministry.

"Further, the importer has to produce an end-use certificate from an officer not below the rank of joint secretary in the Defence Ministry," said the documents.

ICRA Ltd Senior Vice-President and Co-Group Head (Corporate Ratings) Kinjal Shah said the BCD exemption would help lower the aircraft purchase cost for airlines. The documents also showed that the allocation for the Ministry of Civil Aviation saw a 12.4% decline, to Rs 2,102.87 crore from the previous Budget estimates of Rs 2,400.31 crore.

DUTY RELIEF

Centre extends exemption for imports of goods for nuclear power projects

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Weeks after opening up the nuclear sector to private companies, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday proposed exempting basic customs duty on imports of goods needed for atomic power projects for the next 10 years, while substantially hiking the allocation for indigenous nuclear R&D projects.

In another boost to science research, four major proposals from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru, including the setting up of three astronomical telescopes in Ladakh, received the Centre's nod, with Sitharaman noting that such projects would promote astronomy and astrophysics in India.

"To promote astrophysics and astronomy, four telescope infrastructure facilities will be set up or upgraded—the National Large Solar Telescope, the National Large Optical Infrared Telescope, the Himalayan Chandra Telescope, and the COSMOS 2 Planetarium." All three telescopes will be located in Ladakh.

The NLST will be a 2-meter class telescope that will be set up on the banks of Pangong Tso, while NLOIT will be a larger, more than 10-meter class telescope to be established at Hanle in Ladakh. The proposals for setting up the two observatories were long-pending.

Upgrading the Himalayan Chandra Telescope would mean setting up a new 3-meter-class telescope near the existing observatory that has been operational since 2000, sources said. The COSMOS-2 planetarium will come up at Amravati in Andhra Pradesh, for which IIA signed a pact with the Andhra Pradesh government a few months ago.

On the nuclear energy front, Sitharaman proposed to extend the existing basic customs duty exemption on imports of goods required for nuclear power projects till 2035 and expand it for all nuclear plants irrespective of their capacity.

This comes in the wake of the Union government enacting the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) legislation that opens up civilian nuclear power to the private sector after almost eight decades.

The government has set targets of achieving 22 GW of nuclear energy by 2032; 47 GW by 2037, 67 GW by 2042; and 100 GW by 2047, contributing nearly 10% of India's total energy needs. Half of the nuclear energy needs are to be fulfilled by the private sector.

The allocation for R&D projects undertaken at Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) has been almost doubled to Rs 1,800 crore from last year's BE of Rs 1,100 crore, which was further slashed to Rs 919 crore at the RE stage.

The Centre has sanctioned Rs 2,500 crore for the nuclear power project, enhancing it from last year's BE of Rs 2,086 crore, which was cut to Rs 1,333 crore in the revised estimate.

Snow, forests fail to slow hunt for JeM terrorists in J&K's Kishtwar

SRINAGAR, DHNS: Security forces on Sunday intensified a massive cordon-and-search operation in the snow-covered forests of Kishtwar district in Jammu and Kashmir to track down a group of three to four Pakistani terrorists of the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), including their commander Saifullah, who have been on the run for the past fortnight, officials said.

The renewed push came a day after three army soldiers were injured in a fresh exchange of fire with the holed-up terrorists. Security forces maintained a nightlong cordon before resuming search operations early Sunday amid harsh winter conditions.

"The search operation resumed this morning after a nightlong cordon. Efforts to track down the terrorists are underway," an official said.

Officials said one of the terrorists is believed to have been injured in the latest gun battle after being hit by a bullet in his hand. However, the injured terrorist managed to flee and remains on the run along with his associates.

Manipur: NDA MLAs rush to Delhi eyeing govt formation

However, lawmakers are tight-lipped on who will be next chief minister

BJP Manipur president A Sharda Devi arrives at Imphal International Airport to board a flight to Delhi on Sunday. PTI

SUMIR KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI, DHNS

In a fresh bid to restore a "popular government" in conflict-torn Manipur, several MLAs belonging to the BJP and two NDA allies — the National People's Party (NPP) and the Naga People's Front (NPF) — rushed to Delhi for a meeting on Monday with senior legislators, hoping for a "positive outcome".

"We all hope that government is formed soon," Manipur BJP president Sharda Devi told reporters in Imphal just before boarding a flight to New Delhi. The MLAs, however, remained tight-lipped about who would be the next CM.

She said the party high command had "summoned" all NDA MLAs to discuss government formation. The BJP has 37 MLAs — including seven Kukis — in the House of 60. The NPP and the NPF have seven and five legislators, respectively.

The Delhi rush comes days before the completion of one year of President's Rule — on February 13 — in a state that has remained roiled by the conflict involving the Meitei and the Kuki communities since May 2023.

It was, however, not clear whether the seven BJP legislators belonging to the Kuki communities would take part in the meeting.

The Kuki MLAs on December 14 met their Meitei counterparts in New Delhi for the first time since the conflict began.

However, civil society organisations and Kuki armed groups currently under the Suspension of Operations agreement with the government later resolved that the Kuki MLAs would support a new government only if a "written commitment" was given on meeting their demand for a Union Territory — comprising Kuki-dominated areas — with a Legislature.

Sources said four Kuki MLAs, however, were likely to take part in Monday's meeting.

BJP MLAs similarly rushed to New Delhi several times with a request for government formation. However, the party high command insisted on having the Kuki MLAs on board for an "inclusive government", something that might help in the restoration of peace and the resettlement of displaced persons.

Former CM N Biren Singh, who was among the prominent leaders to leave for New Delhi on Sunday, told reporters that he was hopeful about a "positive outcome" this time.

President's Rule was promulgated in Manipur on February 13, 2025, days after Biren resigned as the CM and BJP legislators failed to reach a consensus on his replacement.

The NPP, led by Meghalaya CM Conrad K Sangma, had withdrawn support in November 2024, raising questions about Biren's role in controlling the conflict.

Praful Patel denies reports of being appointed NCP chief

MUMBAI, DHNS: NCP leader and former Union civil aviation minister Praful Patel clarified on Sunday that he had not been appointed the NCP president following Ajit Pawar's death.

The 68-year-old Rajya Sabha member is currently the NCP's working president.

The rumour spread like wildfire after Union Minister Piyush Goyal, a BJP MP, claimed Patel had been appointed the NCP's national chief. Goyal later clarified: "A senior journalist had given me incorrect information that Praful Patel had been elected the NCP president. I gave some statements without verifying the information." He added: "It later came to light that the information was wrong and that the NCP is continuing to work under Dy CM Sunetra Pawar's leadership."

Meanwhile, Patel said, "I have noted a few news reports regarding my appointment as the NCP's national president. I wish to state with absolute clarity that these reports are totally baseless and lack any truth."

Unaware of NCP factions' merger date, says Fadnavis

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

Adding a new dimension to the proposed merger between the NCP and the Sharad Pawar-headed NCP (SP), Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday said he was unaware of the February 12 unification date, and that the late Ajit Pawar, who headed the NCP, would have informed the BJP before taking a final call on the matter.

Devendra Fadnavis

"Ajit Dada was a part of the government... The NCP is an independent party which is part of the Maha Yuti alliance. Could he have taken such a decision without informing us? He was stable in the government," Fadnavis told reporters in Mumbai.

Besides, he reiterated, he shared excellent working and personal relations with Ajit Pawar (66), the deputy CM who died in a plane crash on January 28.

"In fact, the day before (the plane crash), we chatted for more than an hour (after the Cabinet meeting)," he said.

"Was he preparing to quit the NDA where he was stable? He shared everything with me," reiterated Fadnavis.

Pawar's wife, Sunetra (62), was appointed the NCP Legislature Party leader on January 31 and sworn in as the DyCM.

Fadnavis' statement came a day after Sharad Pawar claimed his nephew was in talks with his party for a merger, which was tentatively scheduled on February 12. However, things seemed to be on hold after Ajit Pawar's death.

Asked about keeping the Finance and Planning portfolios with himself, Fadnavis said he had spoken to NCP leaders, and that the decision was taken after mutual consultations and agreement.

From the factions

Meanwhile, Maharashtra NCP president Sunil Tatkare distanced himself from the merger talks, saying: "We decided to join the NDA and are a part of it. We will remain in the NDA."

On the other hand, Sharad Pawar's grandnephew and NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar said of the merger talks: "We will not say anything on this now... We will speak after the 13-day mourning period, which ends on February 9."

MISCELLANY

◆ COMICS ◆

Blondie

ANY NEW WORLD SERIES DISHES?
WE'VE ADDED HOMERUN HASH TO LAST YEAR'S GRAND SLAM GUMBO AND CURVEBALL CORN DOGS
ALSO, WE HAVE SHUTOUT SHRIMP AND PINCH-HITTER PASTA!
BORING! JUST GIVE ME A DOUBLE CHEESEBURGER
OH BROTHER!
SEE? I TOLD YOU WE'VE SPOILED HIM!

Hagar The Horrible

THE DUKE?
I'M HERE TO TAKE BACK WHAT YOU TOOK FROM MY CASTLE!
GOOD!
YOU SAVED ME A TRIP TO THE DUMP! THE DUCHESS'S SHOES DON'T FIT HELGA!

Beetle Bailey

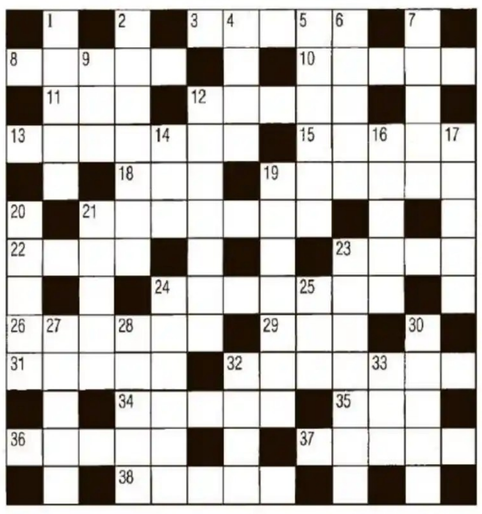
COULD I GET YOUR AUTOGRAPHS?
IT WOULD BE AN HONOR
DO YOU COLLECT A LOT OF AUTOGRAPHS?
YEAH, I GET THEM FROM NOBODIES IN CASE THEY BECOME SOMEBODIES!
GREG + MORT WALKER

Peanuts

CYRUS AND THE PERSIANS CAPTURED BABYLONIA...
THEN CAME ALEXANDER, WHO DRANK HIMSELF TO DEATH IN THE PALACE
I'M NOT SURE WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT
HOWEVER, I HOPE TO HAVE AN UPDATE FOR YOU VERY SOON

Marvin

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12344



ACROSS
3 Scorches (5)
8 Hairdresser's shop (5)
10 Extreme (5)
11 Domestic fuel (3)
12 Lacking enthusiasm (5)
13 Income (7)
15 Appears (5)
18 Joke, informally (3)
19 Revoke (6)
21 Nightclub show (7)
22 Watchful, cautious (4)
23 Locate (4)
24 Flower-shaped badge (7)
26 Skin decoration (6)
29 Fish eggs (3)
31 Perspire (5)
32 Dental surgeon (7)
34 Light boat (5)
35 Was seated (3)
36 Characteristic (5)
37 Pick-me-up (5)
38 To rib (5)

DOWN
1 Weekly pay (5)
2 Posy (7)
4 Cavity (4)
5 Apple type (6)
6 Slumber (5)
7 A play (5)
9 Loo (3)
12 Bugbear, bogey (7)
14 Arrest (3)
16 Weird (5)
17 Smooth and shiny (5)
19 Football official (7)
20 Hits at flies (5)
21 Storage container (5)
23 Cowboy hat (7)
24 Revolve or spin (6)
25 Unit of weight (3)
27 Prize (5)
28 Unspoken (5)
30 Afoot (5)
32 Puts on (4)
33 Boy's name (3)

CRYPTIC

ACROSS
3 Legendary character quick to get out of uniform (5)
8 He's useful in the kitchen (5)
10 Payment is for transportation (5)
11 In the reading room, it's not wanted (3)
12 A tree elaborately cared for? (5)
13 Mother's the greatest! (7)
15 In opera, she makes love between acts, madly! (5)
18 Ted gets carried away by it (3)
19 Shares out, that is, between the girls (6)
21 At the dining place, each is esculent (7)
22 Wad of banknotes or maybe fifty pounds (4)
23 Frighten out of Soho? (4)
24 To do so legally is so legitimate! (7)
26 When arches collapse, you need a drink (6)
29 Rob of a vessel? (3)
31 Try a test, perhaps (5)
32 Sapper out of breath, maybe! (7)
34 Ready to fight for a dream? (5)
35 With a little patience, you'll find the link (3)
36 I step shakily on the slippery slope (5)
37 Rents adjusted for fliers (5)
38 They're of marginal significance (5)

DOWN
1 A two-way source of detective information (5)
2 In the end, I see, bit too fussy (7)
4 A little cough when one is on edge (4)
5 One erected, say, outside the community centre (6)
6 One of a pack taking a trot (5)
7 Something to do with words (anagrammatically?) (5)
9 For a big hit, yes, you get a kiss! (3)
12 The person responsible for upsetting our cart (7)
14 The basis of judo, etc. (3)
16 Being out of key, this makes sense (5)
17 Where the role of '15 Across' was created? (5)
19 Meant to get a hundred pounds by stated right (7)
20 Reading, so to speak, is a certain area (5)
21 Nominally he may be less than pleasing (5)
23 Observed not to need Braille (7)
24 Lose one's rag (3,3)
25 Dog needing a cure for a lost tail? (3)
27 What one has done when all is lost (3,2)
28 Condition of the nation? (5)
30 Passed from one's grasp entirely (5)
32 Keep disturbing the dog (4)
33 It's free at the garage (3)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 2665

ACROSS: 1 Subdue, 4 Gazpacho, 9 Aspire, 10 Fly a kite, 12 Doomsday, 13 Assess, 15 Laud, 16 Magic Flute, 19 Do the trick, 20 D-Day, 23 Cradle, 25 Berberis, 27 Day-to-day, 28 Cubism, 29 Disperse, 30 Streak.

DOWN: 1 Scandal, 2 By-product, 3 Unrest, 5 Ally, 6 Play safe, 7 Chile, 8 Oversee, 11 Macabre, 14 Pitcher, 17 Under fire, 18 Well-done, 19 Decided, 21 Yashmak, 22 Abrupt, 24 Abyss, 26 Mars.

◆SU-DO-KU-6819◆

	9				1	7		
		1	2		4			9
3	8				7			
	1			6		8		
			7		5			
		7		2			5	
			8				2	6
8			5		6	4		
		3	4				8	

hard

8	2	9	5	7	1	6	4	3
5	6	3	2	9	4	1	7	8
1	4	7	8	3	6	5	2	9
9	1	6	3	4	7	8	5	2
7	3	8	6	5	2	4	9	1
4	5	2	1	8	9	3	6	7
3	8	4	9	2	5	7	1	6
6	9	5	7	1	3	2	8	4
2	7	1	4	6	8	9	3	5

SOLUTION TO 6818

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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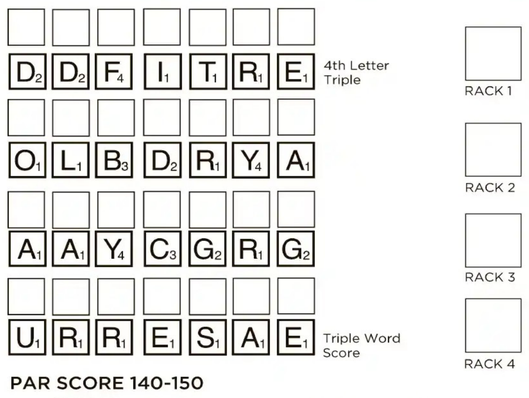

D2 D2 F4 I1 T1 R1 E1
4th Letter Triple
O1 L1 B3 D2 R1 Y4 A1
A1 A1 Y4 C3 G2 R1 G2
U1 R1 R1 E1 S1 A1 E1
Triple Word Score
RACK 1
RACK 2
RACK 3
RACK 4

PAR SCORE 140-150
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

RACK 1 = 39
RACK 2 = 92
RACK 3 = 86
RACK 4 = 89
JUDD'S TOTAL 306

PAR SCORE 200-210

HITORI-3273

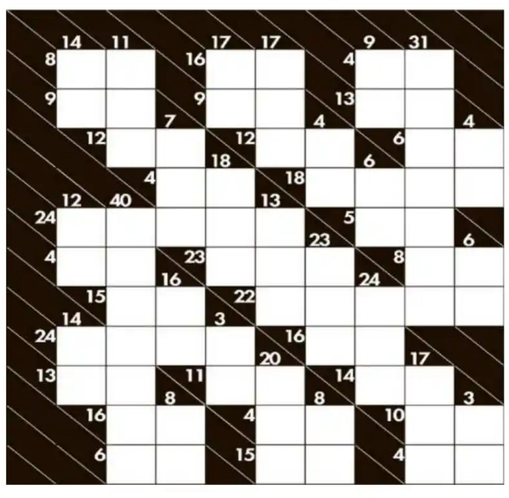
5	6	8	3	6	5	1	7
6	6	5	1	7	5	8	3
1	4	7	5	8	3	5	2
5	5	4	2	5	1	5	7
7	2	1	4	6	8	3	5
3	5	2	5	4	5	6	1
7	3	7	5	2	4	1	6
8	5	3	7	1	7	2	5

SOLUTION TO 3272

■	6	2	5	7	■	3	■
1	■	5	6	■	2	4	3
2	1	8	■	4	7	5	■
■	7	■	3	■	4	■	6
5	4	3	2	8	6	7	1
7	8	■	1	■	5	■	2
■	3	4	■	5	■	2	8
4	2	6	7	1	8	■	5

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

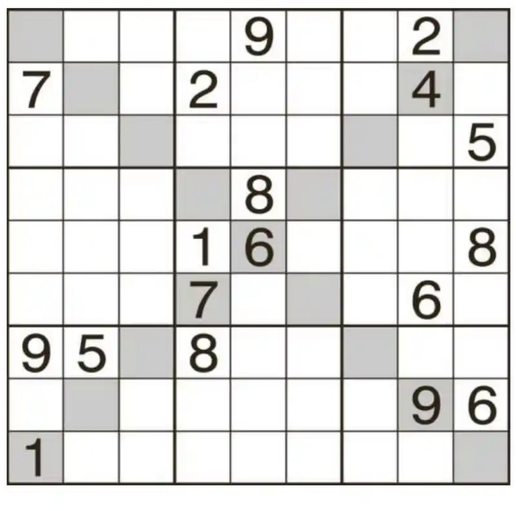
KAKURO- 3273



SOLUTION TO 3272

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3815



SOLUTION TO 3814

9	2	5	6	7	8	3	4	1
3	6	7	4	1	9	5	2	8
8	1	4	5	2	3	9	7	6
2	8	6	3	9	5	7	1	4
7	5	9	1	8	4	2	6	3
4	3	1	7	6	2	8	9	5
5	7	3	2	4	6	1	8	9
1	4	8	9	3	7	6	5	2
6	9	2	8	5	1	4	3	7

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

RPSNU

FNOET

MEAHRM

CTNEIE

I don't like everyone staring at us.
I just want to dance.
Look at you two!
7/24
SPOTTING THE KING AND QUEEN OF THE SCHOOL DANCE WAS EASY BECAUSE THEY WERE ---

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print your answer here: (Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: HATCH BYLAW AFRAID SQUARE
Answer: When the beer makers argued over who made better beer, the result was a — "BREW-HAHA"

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145 terrorists, 17 security personnel killed in Balochistan: Bugti

ISLAMABAD/KARACHI, PTI: At least 145 terrorists and 17 security personnel have been killed in the last 40 hours in multiple counter-terrorism operations in the restive Balochistan province, Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti said on Sunday.

Bugti, in a press conference in Quetta, said that the bodies of all the 145 terrorists were in the custody of the authorities and their identification process was being carried out.

He said this was the highest number of terrorists killed in less than two days ever since security forces launched a war against terror in the province.

Bugti said that 17 personnel of the law enforcement and security forces were killed while fighting the terrorists at different locations.

Earlier in the day, the Pakistan Army said at least 15 soldiers and 92 militants were killed in multiple counter-terrorism operations carried out by security forces.

The army said the operations launched after militants belonging to ethnic Baloch groups carried out attacks on Saturday.

India to buy oil from Venezuela instead of Iran, claims US Prez

New Delhi refrains from officially commenting on Trump's claim

ANIRBAN BHAUMIK
NEW DELHI, DHNS

US President Donald Trump speaks to members of the media aboard Air Force One as he travels from Washington, DC to West Palm Beach, Florida. AFP

After months of asserting that he persuaded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government into slashing energy imports from Russia, President Donald Trump has now claimed that Washington, D.C., and New Delhi already had a deal for India to buy oil from Venezuela, now under the control of the United States, instead of purchasing from Iran.

New Delhi refrained from officially commenting on the US president's claim, although officials said that energy import policies of the Government of India included broad-basing and diversifying sources in accordance with market conditions, and were guided by the objective of safeguarding the interests of consumers in the country.

Trump made the claim about India purchasing oil from Venezuela just a day after Modi had a phone call with Delcy Eloína Rodríguez Gómez, who had taken over as the acting president of the South American nation after the US had carried out a military operation in Caracas and 'captured' the country's President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores on January 3.

"China is welcome to come in and would make a great deal on (sourcing) oil (from Venezuela)," Trump said while speaking to journalists while flying to Palm Beach, Florida, on Saturday. China had been the biggest buyer of oil from Venezuela before Nicolás Maduro's detention by the US military personnel. A journalist aboard Air Force One had asked the US president if China would continue to source energy from Venezuela. "We welcome China," said Trump.

He then made the claim about the deal for India to buy oil from Venezuela instead of Iran.

"We've already made a deal. India is coming in, and they're going to be buying Venezuelan oil as opposed to buying it from Iran. So, we've already made that deal, the concept of the deal," said the US president.

India's crude intake from Venezuela had hit its high point in 2015, when shipments touched about 441,000 barrels per day, accounting for roughly 12% of the country's total oil imports that year. The import volumes remained substantial in the following years, with nearly 108 million barrels in 2019, before procurement dwindled sharply.

US envoy in Caracas

US Ambassador Laura Dogu arrived in Caracas on Saturday to reopen the American diplomatic mission in Venezuela after seven years of severed ties, reports AP.
The move comes almost one month after a military action ordered by US President Donald Trump removed the South American country's then-leader Nicolás Maduro from office.

Xi calls for building 'strong' yuan to boost global role

BEIJING, PTI: Chinese President Xi Jinping has pitched for building a "strong currency" to expand the global use of the yuan and elevate it to the status of an international reserve, a move seen as a call to challenge the US dollar.

China, the world's second-largest economy after the US, has been accelerating the use of the yuan in international trade to reduce reliance on the US dollar. Last year, it settled nearly one-third of its USD 6.2 trillion foreign trade in local currency.

In an article published in Qiushi, the ruling Communist Party's leading theoretical journal, on Saturday, Xi said China needs to build a "strong currency" that can be widely used in international trade, investment and foreign exchange markets, and achieve the status of a global reserve.

Though Xi did not directly mention the US dollar in the article, the excerpts of which were carried by several media outlets here, the Chinese president has been strongly pushing for the yuan (RMB) to become an international currency.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

US singer Art Garfunkel performs onstage during the Recording Academy and Clive Davis' Salute To Industry Icons pre-Grammy gala at the Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California. AFP

AI launches Shanghai-Delhi flight after gap of about 6 years

▶ Air India on Sunday launched the Shanghai-Delhi direct flight resuming its services between the two cities after a gap of about six years, reports PTI from Beijing.

The inaugural Shanghai-New Delhi flight departed from Shanghai Pudong International Airport, carrying over 230 passengers on board the Boeing 787 aircraft, the Indian Consulate in Shanghai said in a press release.

The resumption of Air India flights comes after a gap of nearly six years and represents a significant milestone in normalising bilateral air connectivity following the suspension of services in early 2020.

The Consul General of India in Shanghai, Pratik Mathur, who has seen off the passengers travelling by the inaugural flight, welcomed the resumption of Air India's direct flight services marking a major step forward in restoring people-to-people, business and institutional connectivity between India and China.

Speaking on the occasion, Mathur said, "The resumption of direct flights between Shanghai and New Delhi is a tangible expression of the renewed momentum in India-China engagement."

Gaza's Rafah crossing set to reopen

▶ Gaza's Rafah border crossing with Egypt was busy with activity Sunday as Israel said that limited travel to and from the territory is set to resume after years of near-complete isolation. Reopening the border crossing is a key step as the Israel-Hamas ceasefire moves ahead, reports AP from Cairo.

Israel announced Sunday that the crossing has opened in a test. COGAT, the Israeli military agency that controls aid to Gaza, said in a statement that the crossing was actively being prepared for fuller operation, adding that residents of Gaza would begin to pass through the crossing once preparations were complete.

Palestinian security officers passed through the crossing's Egyptian gate and headed toward the Palestinian gate to join an EU mission that will be supervising exit and entry, said an Egyptian official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Last US-Russia nuclear pact set to end, with Trump mum

WASHINGTON, AFP: Come Thursday, barring a last-minute change, the final treaty in the world that restricted nuclear weapon deployment will be over.

New START, the last nuclear treaty between Washington and Moscow after decades of agreements dating to the Cold War, is set to expire, and with it restrictions on the two top nuclear powers.

The expiration comes as President Donald Trump, vowing "America First," smashes through international agreements that limit the United States, although in the case of New START, the issue may more be inertia than ideology.

Russian President Vladimir Putin in September suggested a one-year extension of New START.

Trump, asked afterward by a reporter for a reaction while he was boarding his helicopter, said an extension "sounds like a good idea to me" -- but little has been heard since.

Putin ally Dmitry Medvedev, who as Russia's president signed New START with counterpart Barack Obama in 2010, said in a recent interview with the Kommersant newspaper that Russia has received no "substantive reaction" on New START but was still giving time to Trump.

A White House official said on condition of anonymity that Trump would like to see "limits on nuclear weapons and involve China in arms control talks."

The way to do that, the official said, Trump "will clarify on his own timeline."

Trump hopeful of Iran deal after Tehran warns of regional war

Khamenei likened the recent protests to a coup

PARIS, AFP

AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI
Iran's Supreme Leader

"They (rioters) attacked the police, government centres, IRGC centres, banks, and mosques, and burned the Koran... It was like a coup"

US President Donald Trump on Sunday said he was hopeful of agreeing a deal with Iran after the country's supreme leader warned that any US attack on the Islamic republic would trigger a regional war.

Following the Iranian authorities' deadly response to anti-government protests that peaked last month, Trump has threatened military action and ordered the dispatch of an aircraft carrier group to the Middle East.

Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Sunday likened the recent protests to a "coup", warning that a US attack would trigger a broad conflict.

"The Americans should know that if they start a war, this time it will be a regional war," he said, telling Iranians they "should not be scared" of Trump's rhetoric.

"They (rioters) attacked the police, government centres, IRGC centres, banks, and mosques, and burned the Koran... It was like a coup," Khamenei said, adding that "the coup was suppressed".

Asked about the Iranian leader's warning, Trump told reporters on Sunday: "Of course he is going to say that.

"Hopefully we'll make a deal. If we don't make a deal, then we'll find out whether or not he was right," he said.

The demonstrations in Iran began as an expression of discontent at the high cost of living, but grew into a mass anti-government movement that the country's leaders have described as "riots" stoked by the United States and Israel.

Iranian authorities nonetheless ordered the release of detained 26-year-old protester Erfan Soltani on bail, his lawyer said on Sunday, after Washington warned he was on death row and threatened an attack if any anti-government demonstrators were executed.

Iran says it now considers EU militaries to be terrorist groups

DUBAI, AP: The speaker of Iran's parliament said on Sunday that the Islamic Republic now considers all European Union militaries to be terrorist groups, lashing out after the bloc declared the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard a terror group over its bloody crackdown on protests.

The announcement by Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf will likely be mostly symbolic. Iran has used a 2019 law to reciprocally declare other nations' militaries terror groups following the United States declaring the Guard a terror group that year.

However, it comes as tensions are high in the Mideast as U.S. President Donald Trump weighs a possible military strike against Iran.

The Islamic Republic also planned a live fire military drill in Strait of Hormuz.

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN: U40109KA1999SGC025521)

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(THROUGH KARNATAKA PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PORTAL ONLY)

KPTCL invites Bids for the following works.

(1) No: CEE/BGKT/Tr (OP)Z/EE(C)/AEE(C)/25-26/18345-53 Date:31.01.2026
KPTCL/2025-26/SE2310 **for Housekeeping of Colony premises at 110kV sub-station Premises Nehru Nagar, Belagavi for the period of 11 Months. coming under the jurisdiction of Transmission (Op) Zone, KPTCL, Bagalakote.**

(2) No: CEE/BGKT/Tr (OP)Z/EE(C)/AEE(C)/25-26/18354-61 Date:31.01.2026
KPTCL/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT3104. **for Conducting Modern Detail survey for conversion of existing 220 kV SC line on SC Tower by DC line on DC towers and MCMV Tower using HTLS Drake conductor between 220KV Guttur to 220KV Balligavi via 220KV Ranebennur Station.** The Bids will be received through electronic tender mode only. The detailed notification regarding the subject enquiry in the E-tendering process can be obtained by logging into (KPP) Portal website: **www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in on or after 02.02.2026 at 4.30 P.M.** Further details can be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/- Chief Engineer (El.,), Transmission (Operations) Zone, KPTCL, Zonal Office Premises, Opp. Sector No.45, Navanagara, Bagalkote-587 103

(Government of Karnataka)
RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DEPARTMENT HASSAN DIVISION HASSAN
Phone No.08172-261640 Email Id:eerdwsd.hsn@gmail.com

TWO COVER SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION NO: 06/2025-26 DATED : 31.01.2026.

On Behalf Governor of Karnataka, The Executive Engineer Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Department Hassan Division Hassan Has Invited the Tender for the works of Channarayapattana Taluk Approved under 4215 MVS O&M Mention Below, Two Cover System works Channarayapattana Taluk 02 Works. Above work tenders are invited in Two cover system in e-procurement portal. The tender details are available in https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in From 31.01.2026 After 05.30P.M. The contractors can contact the office during office hours till 06.02.2026 and get any information. The bidder should submitted the tender with in the dated: 09.02.2026 before 05.30 P.M. On Dated:04.02.2026 The Pre-bid Meeting will be conducted in this office, Interested Contractor may participated. Venue : Office of the Executive Engineer, Rural Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Department, Zilla Panchyath Building, N.R,Circle Hassan. The Technical bid will open on dated:11.02.2026 after 05:30 P.M. The Financial bid of the Technically qualified bidder will be open on dated:13.02.2026 after 05.30 P.M The Executive Engineer has reserved the rights of to cancel all tender or any one tender without giving any reason.

Sd/- Executive Engineer Rural drinking water and sanitation Dept, Hassan division, Hassan.
ವಾಸಾಸಂಇ/ಹಿಸನಿ/ಹಾಸನ/1014/ಕೆಎಸ್.ಎಂಸಿಎ/2025–26

US prosecutors see no more charges after final Epstein file dump

WASHINGTON, AFP

A top US prosecutor signaled Sunday that authorities would not bring any more charges after the release of millions of new documents related to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein in a case that has drawn in many world-famous names.

"The review that we had done before concluded that there was no such information, and that's where we remain for what we've seen and what we've released from the Epstein files," Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche said on CNN's "State of the Union" show.

More than three million items made available online over the weekend included emails, photos and video clips, and mentions of numerous powerful figures such as President Donald Trump, Elon Musk, Bill Gates and former prince Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor.

"This review is over," Blanche added in an interview on ABC's "This Week," saying just a small number of documents were still being reviewed by a judge.

Ghislaine Maxwell, Epstein's former girlfriend, is the only other person charged in connection with his crimes. She was convicted of trafficking underage girls for Epstein and is serving a 20-year prison sentence.

Survivors of Epstein have said their alleged abusers "remain hidden and protected" despite the latest release of documents.

Blanche, who previously served as Trump's personal lawyer, has dismissed suggestions that embarrassing material about the president was redacted, and Trump suggested that the latest document dump cleared his name.

"I didn't see it myself, but I was told by some very important people that not only does it absolve me, it's the opposite of what people were hoping -- you know, the radical left," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One late Saturday.

The explosive case has dogged Trump, who moved in the same social circles as the disgraced financier in Florida and New York, with the president fighting for months to prevent release of the vast trove of documents.

Trump's right-wing base has long been obsessed by the Epstein saga and the belief that the financier oversaw a sex trafficking ring for the world's elite.

Blanche has said he did not expect the "Epstein files" to quell public curiosity and conspiracy theories.

Trump has given varying accounts of why he fell out with Epstein and has criticized the file dumps, saying that people who innocently met Epstein over the years risked having their reputations smeared.

A reveller from cultural society Bloco das Latinhas, which emphasises sustainability with revellers crafting costumes and accessories from recycled aluminum cans, looks on during Carnival festivities in Salvador, Brazil. REUTERS

'Unusual' voter migration: BNP

▶ The BNP on Sunday alleged it found an "unusual" voter migration in capital Dhaka and other parts of Bangladesh ahead of the February 12 parliamentary elections, reports PTI from Dhaka.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by late former prime minister Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman, also demanded Election Commission (EC) data on such suspicious activities.

"A large number of voters migrated to some specific constituencies in Dhaka and other parts of the country over the last year-and-a-half, which is unusual," BNP's Election Steering Committee chairman Nazrul Islam Khan told reporters emerging from a meeting with Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin.

Khan said the BNP asked the EC to provide the constituency-wise voters' migration data.

"The EC said the number of migrated voters to each constituency was not more than 2,000-3,000," Khan said but added that the party is not satisfied with the explanation and feared the Commission was not provided with exact data from departments concerned.

There is, however, no reaction from the Election Commission.

Military victory in Ukraine soon: Medvedev

MOSCOW, PTI

A member of Russia's Investigative Committee works on the ruins of a house, which was destroyed during recent Ukrainian drone attack. REUTERS

A military victory is already visible in Ukraine across a number of parameters, Deputy Chairman of Russia's National Security Council Dmitry Medvedev said Sunday, adding, it is also necessary to think about what comes next.

As the war against the former Soviet republic completes four years later this month, Medvedev also said US President Donald Trump is "genuinely trying" to go down in history as a peacemaker.

"It is absolutely clear that the fact of a military win is very important. And it is visible across a number of parameters," Medvedev said.

He was speaking during an interview to several media outlets, including state-run news agency TASS and military channel WarGonzo.

Asserting that the objectives of the Special Military Operation (SMO) would be achieved as soon as possible, he underscored, "I would like this to happen as quickly as possible."

Medvedev, a former president and a prime minister, also said that it is also necessary to think about what comes next.

Ukraine war talks next week, says Zelenskyy

KYIV, AFP: A second round of talks between Russian, Ukrainian and US officials on a US-drafted plan to end the nearly four-year Ukraine war will begin on Wednesday, instead of on Sunday, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

Zelenskyy did not give a reason for the delay.

The announcement comes a day after one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's top envoys held surprise talks with US officials in Florida. "The dates for the next trilateral meetings have been set -- Feb 4 and 5 in Abu Dhabi," Zelenskyy said.

A Hindu devotee in a state of trance reacts before climbing the 272 steps to the Batu Caves temple to make offerings during the Thaipusam festival at Batu Caves on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur on Sunday. AFP

TENNIS AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Alcaraz completes Aus mission

22-year-old Spaniard becomes youngest to capture a career Slam

MELBOURNE, AFP

Carlos Alcaraz swept past Novak Djokovic to win his first Australian Open on Sunday and become the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam, denying the Serbian great an unprecedented 25th major.

The Spaniard was imperious after a slow start in dismissing the 38-year-old, 2-6, 6-2, 6-3, 7-5 on Rod Laver Arena to claim a seventh Slam title and cement himself as undisputed world number one.

In doing so, he became the youngest man in the Open era to win all four majors, adding to his two titles each from Wimbledon and the French and US Opens.

At 22, he surpassed legendary countryman Rafael Nadal -- in the crowd to witness the feat -- who was two years older when he did the same.

A seventh Slam put him alongside John McEnroe and Mats Wilander and one behind Andre Agassi, Jimmy Connors and Ivan Lendl.

"It's an honour to be here in Melbourne every year," Alcaraz said, before writing on a TV camera lens: "Job finished. Four out of four complete."

"So I just want to say thank you very much for pushing me in the tough moments during the matches."

He paid tribute to Djokovic.

"You were talking about how I'm doing the things I am, but what you're doing is really inspiring, not only for tennis players but athletes around the world."

It was a first defeat for Djokovic in a Melbourne final, having won all 10 previously, leaving him still searching for a landmark 25th major to better Australia's Margaret Court, who was also watching on centre court.

Djokovic, striving to become the oldest man to lift a Grand Slam singles trophy, last won one at the US Open in 2023. Since then Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner have shared the spoils.

"I must be very honest and say that I didn't think I would be standing in the closing ceremony of a Grand Slam again so I owe you the gratitude of pushing me forward in the last couple weeks," Djokovic said, speaking to the fans in the stadium.

He went on to hint this could be his last time at Melbourne Park.

"God knows what happens tomorrow, let alone in six months or 12 months, so it has been a great ride."

He also joked with Nadal in the stands, saying: "There are too many Spanish legends. I feel like I was one against two tonight. It's not fair."

Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates winning his maiden Australian Open title after beating Serbia's Novak Djokovic in the final in Melbourne on Sunday. REUTERS

IN SEVENTH HEAVEN

- With his Australian Open triumph, Carlos Alcaraz became the youngest man in the Open era to win all four majors, adding to his two titles each from Wimbledon and the French and US Opens.
- At 22, he surpassed legendary countryman Rafael Nadal, who was two years older when he did the same.
- Alcaraz is the ninth man to achieve the career Grand Slam.
- A seventh Slam puts Alcaraz alongside John McEnroe and Mats Wilander and one behind Andre Agassi, Jimmy Connors and Ivan Lendl.

'Quiet assassin' Rybakina targets world No. 1

MELBOURNE, AFP: Elena Rybakina **(in pic)** beat the two top-ranked players in the world to win the Australian Open and show that her quiet ruthlessness can propel her to No. 1 and more Grand Slam glory.

The Moscow-born Kazakh emerged from a power battle with top seed Aryna Sabalenka to claim the Melbourne title in three tight sets on Saturday.

The 26-year-old's 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 triumph brought her a second major crown, more than three years after winning Wimbledon.

Two-time Australia champion Sabalenka had her chances, notably leading the final set 3-0, but the fifth seed retained her trademark cool to pull through.

Rybakina later revealed that beneath her understated celebrations was huge relief.

Proving it was no fluke, it was the second time in three months that big-serving Rybakina has beaten the world No.1.

She has been the form player on tour since the middle of last year and is set to return to her career-high ranking of three.

Australian media labelled her a "quiet assassin".

India colts rout Pak to reach semis

BULAWAYO, PTI

Young Kanishk Chouhan showed his all-round prowess as India comfortably outclassed arch-rivals Pakistan by 58 runs in a Super Six encounter to qualify for the semifinal of the ICC U-19 World Cup here on Sunday.

India will meet Afghanistan in the semifinal while England and Australia will play in the other last-four encounter.

It was all-rounder Kanishk, whose quickfire 29-ball-35 and a 50-run stand for the eighth wicket with Khilan Patel (21 not out off 15 balls) took India U-19 to a decent 252 in 49.5 overs.

However, for Pakistan to qualify for the semifinals on account of better run-rate, they needed to reach 253 in 33.3 overs but their batters didn't seem interested in making a match as they managed 167 for 4 in 33.3 overs before finally getting bowled out for 194 in 46.2 overs.

In the bowling department, it was Kanishk, who basically stopped the Pakistan team on its tracks with figures of 1 for 30 in 10 overs which included an astounding 40 dot balls.

With pitch assisting spinners, left-arm spinner Khilan Patel (3/35 in 9.2 overs) and skipper Ayush Mhatre (3/231 in 8 overs) also choked the run flow throughout the middle overs.

Pakistan's Asia Cup hero Sameer Minhas was dismissed by a Henil Patel off-cutter and the remaining batters strangely displayed a defensive mindset.

Earlier, Kanishk and Khilan added 50 runs in just 5.1 overs to provide a final flourish after Vedant's patient 68 off 98 balls helped them lay a platform. Put into bat, Vaibhav Suryavanshi (30 off 22 balls) started in his typical attacking fashion befire being dismissed trying a second pull-shot in as many deliveries.

Brief scores: India U-19: 252 all out in 49.5 overs (Vaibhav Suryavanshi 30, Vedant Trivedi 68, RS Ambarish 29, Kanishk Chouhan 35; Mohammad Sayyam 2-69, Abdul Subhan 3-33) bt Pakistan U-19: 194 all out in in 46.2 overs (Hamza Zahoor 42, Usman Khan 68, Farhan Yousuf 38; Khilan Patel 3-35, Ayush Mhatre 3-21) by 58 runs.

Kanishk Chouhan

Sports goods sector gets Rs 500 cr boost; allocation hiked

NEW DELHI, PTI: The sports goods manufacturing sector emerged as a major beneficiary with a first-time allocation of Rs 500 crore as the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports' allocation was hiked by over Rs 1000 crore in the Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman here on Sunday.

The overall budget allocation for the ministry was Rs 4479.88 crore, an increase of Rs 1133.34 crore from the 2025-26 revised allocation of Rs 3346.54 crore.

The allocation for Sports Authority of India (SAI), the nodal body for the conduct of national camps and logistical arrangements for athletes' training, was enhanced from Rs 880 crore to Rs 917.38 crore.

SAI is also responsible for maintaining and utilising stadia across the country.

The National Dope Testing Laboratory and National Anti-Doping Agency's budget, however, got reduced from Rs 28.55 crore in 2025-26 to Rs 23 crore and from Rs 24.30 crore to Rs 20.30 crore respectively.

The previous budgets did not have any provision relating to sports goods sector.

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

TENDER NOTIFICATION-2nd Call (only through KPP Portal)

BWSSB invites Tenders from Registered Contractors for the following works.

Office of the Chief Engineer (UWP), 5th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560009

Sl No.	Division	IFT Number	Amount put to Tender / EMD Amount	Last date & time for Submission of Tender	Date & time for Opening of Tender
1.	WWM V.Valley-1	BWSSB/EE(WWM-V.V)-1/ PB/1368/2025-26 Dated: 29.01.2026	Rs. 65.52 Lakhs / Rs.1,31,100/-	09.02.2026 upto 5:00 pm	10.02.2026 at 5:30 pm
2.		BWSSB/EE(WWM-V.V)-1/ PB/1365/2025-26 Dated: 29.01.2026	Rs. 19.89 Lakhs / Rs.49,800/-		
3.		BWSSB/EE(WWM-V.V)-1/ PB/1366/2025-26 Dated: 29.01.2026	Rs. 42.16 Lakhs / Rs.42,200/-		

Sd/- Executive Engineer (WWM-V.V)-1

The detail regarding the tender & participation in the e-procurement portal process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** For further details contact the above signed office during working hours. DIPR/CP/5346/CCL/2025-26

Karnataka Urban Infrastructure Development and Finance Corporation Ltd.

Nagarabhivruddi Bhavan, #22, 17th 'F' Cross, Old Madras Road, Indiranagar 2nd Stage, Near BMTC Bus Depot, Bengaluru-560 038. Telephone No: 91-80-25196100, 25196124 Fax: 080-25196110 e-mail: info@kuidfc.com Website: www.kuidfc.com

No: KUIDFC/UWM/TEND/2025-26/26/5437 Date:31.01.2026

Short term Tender Notification

KUIDFC invites tenders under NGT Environmental compensation fund and SBM (U) 2.0 for the below mentioned projects from the eligible Contractors. The tender document will be available on KPP portal of GoK **(https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in)**

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Amount put to Tender (Excl GST) Rs. in Lakhs	Earnest Money Deposit Rs. in Lakhs
1	Construction/Upgradation of Sewage System in **Chikkaballapura Town** along with 5 years Operation & Maintenance (including 1-year Defect liability period) under NGT Environmental & Compensation fund through Design, Built, Operate and Transfer (DBOT) model.	2461.09	25.00
2	Construction of Sewage Treatment Plants of various Capacities ranging from 2.41 to 2.63 MLD in **Holalkere, Molakalmuru Towns in Chitradurga Dist.**, **Jagalur in Davangere Dist.**, & **Madhugiri in Tumkur Dist**. along with 5 years Operation & Maintenance (including 1-year Defect liability period) under Swachh Bharat Mission (U)-2.0 fund through Design, Built, Operate and Transfer (DBOT) model **(Package: SBM_BLR_Pkg-4)**	1137.61	12.00
3	Construction of Sewage Treatment Plants of 1.73 MLD in **Soraba, Jog Kargal Towns in Shivamogga Dist**. along with 5 years Operation & Maintenance (including 1-year Defect liability period) under Swachh Bharat Mission (U)-2.0 fund through Design, Built, Operate and Transfer (DBOT) model. **(Package: SBM_BLR_Pkg-5)**	539.81	9.00
4	Construction of Sewage Treatment Plants (STP) of varying capacities of 2.44 to 7.84 MLD at **Shorapur, Hunasagi, Kakkera & Kembhavi ULBs of Yadgir District** along with 5 years Operation & Maintenance (including 1-year Defect liability period) under Swachh Bharat Mission (U)-2.0 fund through Design, Built, Operate and Transfer (DBOT) model. **(Package: SBM/KLB_Pkg-8)**	2169.75	22.00
5	Construction of Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) of 3.19 MLD capacity at **Chincholi ULB of Kalburgi District** along with 5 years Operation & Maintenance (including 1-year Defect liability period) under Swachh Bharat Mission (U)-2.0 fund through Design, Built, Operate and Transfer (DBOT) model. **(Package: SBM/KLB_Pkg-9)**	427.34	6.50
6	"Construction of 3.85 MLD Sewage Treatment Plant in **Someshwara town"** along with 5 years Operation & Maintenance (including 1-year Defect liability period) under Swachh Bharat Mission (U)-2.0 fund through Design, Built, Operate and Transfer (DBOT) model.	569.19	9.00
7	Construction of Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) of capacity 7.30 MLD at **Athani** ULB of Belagavi District along with 5 years Operation & Maintenance (including 1-year Defect liability period) under Swachh Bharat Mission (U)-2.0 fund through Design, Built, Operate and Transfer (DBOT) model. **(Package: SBM_BGM_Pkg-11) Call-2**	1231.03	12.5

1) Tender Publish Date: **03.02.2026**. 2) Pre-bid meeting Date & Time: **12.02.2026 Time: 11.30 AM.** 3) Last Date & Time for Bid submission: **20.02.2026 Time: 5.30 PM.** 4) Date & Time of Opening of Technical bid: **23.02.2026 Time: 11.30 AM**. 5) Date & Time of Opening of Financial bid: **03.03.2026 Time: 11.30 AM.**

Interested bidders may view, download & upload the tenders only through KPP portal. Any further notification will be through KPP portal and KUIDFC official website only.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer, Project Monitoring Unit,
UWM-KUIDFC, Bengaluru.

DIPR/CP/5341/MAA/2025-26

Abdusattorov leads as Gukesh draws

WIJK AAN ZEE (THE NETHERLANDS), PTI

World Champion D Gukesh **(in pic)** played out a draw with Hans Moke Niemann in the 12th and penultimate round while Nodirbek Abdusattorov regained sole lead with a crushing victory over Matthias Bluebaum to inch closer to the title here on Sunday.

Javokhir Sindarov did not risk anything against R Praggnanandhaa and settled for a draw to slip to second spot on 7.5 points, a half point behind compatriot Abdusattorov and it could well be an Uzbek domination in the first super-tournament of the year.

Niemann, Jorden van Foreest of Holland and Vincent Keymer of Germany share the third spot on 7 points apiece ahead of wonder-boy Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus of Turkey and Bluebaum.

Erdogmus played yet another decisive game crushing Vladimir Fedoseev of Slovenia.

Gukesh, on six points, is in joint eighth spot in the company of Dutchman Anish Giri. Fedoseev on 5.5 is ahead of Praggnanandhaa on five who in turn is half point clear of Arjun Erigaisi and Aravindh Chithambaram.

Gukesh and Niemann played a crazy game wherein the American sacrificed a pieces when it was just not warranted. Gukesh had some chances to make use of the extra material but he also erred and let the American off the hook.

Results (round 12): Hans Moke Niemann (US, 7) drew with D Gukesh (Ind, 6); Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb, 7.5) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 5); Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 8) beat Matthias Bluebaum (Ger, 6.5); Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 7) drew with Arjun Erigaisi (Ind, 4.5); Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus (Tur, 6.5) bt Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 5.5); Aravindh Chithambaram (Ind, 4.5) drew with Anish Giri (Ned, 6).

Devika annexes throne

Indian wins Thailand Masters after injured Goh pulls out

BANGKOK, PTI

Young Indian shuttler Devika Sihag clinched her maiden BWF Super 300 crown after Malaysia's Goh Jin Wei retired midway through the women's singles final of the Thailand Masters, a USD 250,000 event, here on Sunday.

The 20-year-old from Haryana was leading 21-8, 6-3 when world No. 68 Goh, a two-time former world junior champion, pulled out due to a hamstring injury, handing the Indian the biggest title of her career.

Ranked world No. 63, Devika trains under coach Umendra Rana at the Padukone-Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence in Bengaluru and has also been sharpening her game alongside two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu under Indonesian coach Irwansyah Adi Pratama.

Devika Sihag. X

The final brought ecstasy for Devika but agony for her opponent Goh, who looked exhausted after playing four long three-game matches in the run-up to the final.

On Sunday, the Malaysian looked visibly tired as her movement was laboured. Goh, who has struggled for form and fitness over the past two years and had complained of fatigue on Saturday, found it difficult to move around the court, often troubled by her left leg which would not budge.

In a solid start Devika opened up a 4-0 lead with the help of her deep returns, mixing her strokes well. A lucky net cord helped Goh log her first point.

The Indian's ability to produce cross-court and straight smashes, along with drops from the same action, helped her deceive her opponent as she zoomed to 9-2.

A precise smash followed by another delightful shot helped her take an 11-4 lead at the break.

A body smash from Goh was the first convincing shot, but Devika made her scramble across the court as the Malaysian just could not read the Indian.

The Malaysian looked exhausted and did not seem to have the fuel to go through the grind that Devika put her through. It was one-way traffic as Devika held 13 game points with a superb net cross.

Another backhand net cross sealed it for the Indian.

After the change of sides, Devika moved to a 6-3 lead as her opponent looked in discomfort and eventually decided to quit.

Sesko special rescues United

MANCHESTER, AFP

Benjamin Sesko rode to Manchester United's rescue in another thrilling 3-2 win for Michael Carrick's men over Fulham on Sunday, as Aston Villa's Premier League title challenge faltered in defeat to 10-man Brentford.

A third consecutive win since Carrick took the reins at Old Trafford propelled United back into the top four at the expense of Chelsea and Liverpool. A week on from a 3-2 win at Arsenal, it was another throwback to United's glory days during Carrick's playing career as they snatched victory in dramatic fashion after a Fulham fightback.

Manchester United's Benjamin Sesko (left) celebrates after scoring the winner against Fulham on Sunday. REUTERS

Casemiro opened the scoring from Bruno Fernandes' free-kick to give United the perfect start on 19 minutes.

The Brazilian then turned provider for United's second but Matheus Cunha still had plenty to do before lashing high beyond Bernd Leno.

Just a second defeat in nine league games dealt a blow to Fulham's own hopes of European football next season.

The visitors showed plenty of fight as Raul Jimenez's penalty halved the deficit five minutes from time before Kevin's spectacular strike looked to have salvaged a point. But United went straight down the other end and Sesko spun onto Fernandes' pass before blasting into the top corner.

Crystal Palace also failed to make the most of a man advantage amid fears of being dragged into a relegation battle in a 1-1 draw at Nottingham Forest.

Results: Aston Villa: 0 lt to Brentford: 1 (Ouattara 45+1); Manchester United: 3 (Casemiro 19th, Cunha 56th, Sesko 90+4) bt Fulham: 2 (Jimenez 85th, Kevin 90+2); Nottingham Forest: 1 (Gibbs-White 5th) drew with Crystal Palace: 1 (Sarr 45+2).

Mbappe penalty earns Real late win in spicy derby clash

MADRID, AFP: Kylian Mbappe **(in pic)** stayed calm to roll home a 100th-minute penalty and claim Real Madrid a 2-1 win over nine-man Rayo Vallecano on Sunday in a spicy La Liga derby clash.

Los Blancos cut Barcelona's lead back to one point at the top of the table after the Spanish champions beat Elche on Saturday.

Vinicius Junior scored early on for Madrid after Jude Bellingham limped off with an apparent hamstring injury. Jorge de Frutos pulled Rayo level early in the second half as Madrid fans showed their anger at their team.

After Pathe Ciss's red card tilted the game in Madrid's favour, Mbappe netted from the spot at the death for his 22nd La Liga goal this season.

Pep Chavarria was also sent off in the final stages for Rayo, 17th, who took a shaky Madrid to the wire before falling short.

After the hosts' defeat at Benfica in midweek which forced them into the Champions League play-off round, the Santiago Bernabeu crowd was in unforgiving mood. Arbeloa and Mbappe had begged fans to support the team but they whistled their own players.

Result: Real Madrid: 2 (Vinicius 15th, Mbappe 90+10) bt Rayo Vallecano: 1 (De Frutos 49th).

Fynbos wins main event

MUMBAI RESULTS

Fynbos, from the stables of Pesi Shroff and ridden by Tom Marquand, won the Villoo C Poonawalla Indian Derby, the feature event of the Mumbai races on Sunday.

1. Tattersal Million - 1400M: Vincero (Jaydev Mody) Aditya Waydande 1; Don Julio (Trevor Patel) 2; Ashwa Gypsy (Siddhrath) 3; Looking Like A Wow (Ramswarup) 4; Wb: Lnk, Lnk, 1-1/2L. T: 1:22.60. TB: Shazaan Shah. Fav: Don Julio.

2. Keki D Mehta Trophy - 1600M: Alexios (Geoffrey Nagpal) David Allan 1; Radiant Reign (Trevor Patel) 2; Puccini (Tom Marquand) 3; Vortex (Yash Narredu) 4; Wb: 3-1/4, Nk, 2-3/4L. T: 1:37.70. TB: Sanjay Kolse. Fav: Puccini.

3. Rusi Patel Trophy - 1600M: Pride's Prince (Sudendu Shah) Mustakim Alam 1; African Gold (Akshay Kumar) 2; Ravishing Beauty (Trevor Patel) 3; Chagall (A Prakash) 4; Wb: 1/2, 3/4, 1/2L. 1-36.66. TB: Imtiaz Sait. Fav: African Gold.

4. Sir Homi Mehta Million - 1200M: Lady Scarlet (Jaisal Singh) Trevor Patel 1; Pinnacle (Yash Narredu) 2; Beast Mode (David Allan) 3; Rambo (TS Jodha) 4; Wb: 3-1/4, 1-1/2, 4-1/4L. T: 1:09.22. TB: Adhirajsingh Jodha. Fav: Lady Scarlet.

5. Thackers Eclipse Stakes Of India - 2000M: King Ke (Vijay B Shirke) C Umesh 1; Thalassa (Musakim Alam) 2; Psychic Star (G Vivek) 3; Evaldo (Akshay Kumar) 4; Wb: 1-3/4, Shd, 1-3/4L. T: 1:08.70. TB: Pesi Shroff. Fav: Psychic Star.

6. Rattonsey Multi - Million - 1400M: Buckingham (Arun Alagappan) David Allan 1; D'Artagnan (G Vivek) 2; Nebula (TS Jodha) 3; Admirable (Akshay Kumar) 4; Wb: 1-1/2, 3-1/2, 2-1/2L. T: 1:21.95. TB: Pesi Shroff. Fav: Psychic Star.

7. Villoo C Poonawalla Indian Derby - 2400M: Fynbos (KN Dhunjibhoy) Tom Marquand 1; Sovereign King (Akshay Kumar) 2; Kings Gambit (Yash Narredu) 3; Red Bishop (Trevor Patel) 4; Wb: 5-1/4, 2-1/4, 1L. T: 2:27.62. TB: Pesi Shroff. Fav: Fynbos.

8. Coromandel Gromor Million - 1200M: Social Butterfly (Mukul Sonawala) Trevor Patel 1; Scaramouche (TS Jodha) 2; Fontana (Ramswarup) 3; Esperanza (Adityw Waydande) 4; Wb: 1-1/4, 1L, Nk. T: 1:09.23. TB: Dallas Todywalla. Fav: Western Star.

9. Queen's Necklace Million - 1200M: Desert Classic (MN Mirza) Mukesh Kumar 1; Ministry Of Time (Trevor Patel) 2; Santana Row (CS Jodha) 3; Tropical Paradise (Nikhil Parmar) 4; Wb: 3/4, 1-3/4, 3/4L. T: 1:10.60. TB: Pradeep Chouhan. Fav: Ministry Of Time.

Bengaluru dividends:
I race: Rs 35w; 12, 12, 22p; Fc: Rs 65; Q: Rs 41; Shp: Rs 31; Thp: Rs 55; Tri: Rs 662 & 339; Ex: Rs 2,995 & 1,283.
II race: Rs 36w; 10, 18, 10p; Fc: Rs 528; Q: Rs 201; Shp: Rs 57; Thp: Rs 70; Tri: Rs 423 & 90; Ex: Rs 1,634 & 642.
III race: Rs 68w; 22, 11p; Fc: Rs 251; Q: Rs 91; Shp: Rs 25; Thp: Rs 28; Tri: Rs 613 & 350; Ex: Rs 1,510 & 1,726.
IV race: Rs 14w; 10, 36, 15p; Fc: Rs 190; Q: Rs 160; Shp: Rs 104; Thp: Rs 36; Tri: Rs 435 & 119; Ex: Rs 1,294 & 718.
V race: Rs 95w; 22, 18, 12p; Fc: Rs 622; Q: Rs 207; Shp: Rs 44; Thp: Rs 61; Tri: Rs 830 & 317; Ex: Rs 7,311 & 5,222.
VI race: Rs 15w; 10, 11p; Fc: Rs 32; Q: Rs 20; Shp: Rs 18; Thp: Rs 22; Tri: Rs 30 & 16; Ex: Rs 69 & 69.
VII race: Rs 22w; 12, 23, 32p; Fc: Rs 176; Q: Rs 122; Shp: Rs 62; Thp: Rs 74; Tri: Rs 1,784 & 713; Ex: Rs 9,368 & 3,154.
VIII race: Rs 37w; 13, 32, 18p; Fc: Rs 579; Q: Rs 451; Shp: Rs 90; Thp: Rs 59; Tri: Rs 5,458 & 2,144; Ex: Rs 76,358 & 32,726.
IX race: Rs 59w; 18, 12, 16p; Fc: Rs 99; Q: Rs 81; Shp: Rs 29; Thp: Rs 43; Tri: Rs 263 & 150; Ex: Rs 911 & 546.
First jackpot: Rs 16,360 (22). **Runner-up:** Rs 2,488 (62). **Second jackpot:** Rs 32,844 (211). **Runner- up:** Rs 1,627 (18250). **I treble:** Rs 1,218 (75). **II treble:** Rs 227 (337). **III treble:** Rs 690 (220).

The Panther for feature

DELHI SELECTIONS

S Nawab-trained The Panther, to be ridden by Nazil, is fancied to win the David Livingston Plate, the feature event of the Delhi races to be run over a distance of seven furlongs at the races on Monday.

1. Superestrella Plate - 1200M: Telekinesis 1, Bay Of Biscay 2, Humaira 3.
2. Light Of Magic Plate (Div I) - 1000M: Eyes On The Prize 1. Tomorrows Dreams 2, Time To Win 3.
3. Light Of Magic Plate (Div II) - 1000M: Danny's Girl 1, Divit 2, Jet Sukhoi 3.
4. Shining Force Plate - 1000M: Real Stuff 1, Golden Sun 2, Treasure 3.
5. David Livingston Plate - 1400M: The Panther 1, Lodge Keeper 2, Eliminator 3.
6. Grenadine Plate - 1400M: Poly Czar 1, Emperor Ashoka 2, Dubai Falcon 3.
Day's best: Telekinesis. **Jackpot:** 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6. **Treble:** 4, 5 & 6.

Dean, Gagan clinch maiden INRC title

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka's Dean Mascarenhas and experienced co-driver Gagan Karumbaiah sealed their maiden Indian National Rally Championship (INRC) title with a round to spare, even as their TSI Racing teammates from Himachal Pradesh, Aditya Thakur and Virender Kashyap, clinched overall honours at the Rally of the Highlands, the fifth and penultimate round of the season at the National Automotive Testing Tracks in Pithampur.

Provisional final Results: Aditya Thakur/ Virender Kashyap (both Himachal) TSI Racing, (01: 39:49.2) 1, Karna Kadur (Bengaluru)/ Musa Sherif (Kasargod), Arka Motorsports (01:40:40.0), 2; Dean Mascarenhas (Mangaluru)/ Gagan Karumbaiah (Kodagu) (TSI Racing) (01:41:02.9), 3.
INRC2: Jason Saldanha (Mangaluru)/ PV Srinivasa Murthy (Bengaluru) Arka Motorsports (01:41:21.0) 1; Fabid Ahmer (Palakkad)/ Milen George (Kottayam), Pvt. (01:41:28.8), 2; Harkrishan Wadia (Delhi)/ Kunal Kashyap (Shimla) Arka Motorsports (01: 42:39.0), 3.
Juniors: Abhimanyu Sajeevan Snap Racing (01:41:36.6), 1; Arjun Y Mavaji (Bengaluru) pvt (01:48:04.8), 2; R-Tech Motorsports (01:50:44.7), 3.

Surya's return to form and Kishan's blistering comeback augurs well

Positives plenty but SOME CONCERNS REMAIN

Suryakumar Yadav

Ishan Kishan

SIDNEY KIRAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

The five-match series against New Zealand was the final preparatory test for India ahead of the T20 World Cup starting this Saturday, and the domineering Men in Blue checked most boxes, but a couple of concerns still remain ahead of the marquee event.

The welcome return to form of skipper Suryakumar Yadav, the stunning comeback of Ishan Kishan from the wilderness, Abhishek Sharma's continued decimation of bowling attacks, finisher Shivam Dube adding more armoury to his arsenal — both as a batter and bowler — and late inclusion Rinku Singh showing he hasn't lost his firepower at the death all augur well for the Indians, who will be hoping to become the first team to defend the world T20 crown.

However, opener Sanju Samson's poor form, where he was found wanting repeatedly against quality pace bowling, the sudden dip in form of ace spinners Varun Chakravarthy and Kuldeep Yadav, and injury concern to spin all-rounder Axar Patel stick out like a sore thumb in a high-functioning unit that is playing T20 cricket at a different level as compared to its rivals.

Suryakumar arrived to the series in atrocious form, having not scored a half-century in 22 innings. Since taking over the reins from Rohit Sharma after the T20 World Cup in July 2024, Suryakumar struggled to be the destructive player he was renowned for as the cross of captaincy seemed to weigh heavily on him. Although the 35-year-old's job and position appeared safe, it's never comfortable for the management to carry a leader in dire straits.

Shivam Dube

In the nick of time, Suryakumar turned it around with a Player of the Series performance, scoring 242 runs in five games at a phenomenal strike rate of 196.74. Batting at the elite level has a lot to do with confidence as much as skill, and the moment Suryakumar smashed an unbeaten 82 in the second T20I, the swagger was there for all to see in the ensuing three games. His trademark flicks over fine-leg and those gorgeous drives over covers all flowed like a river that is certain to send jitters to opposition bowlers.

Kishan was a stunning left-field choice by the selection committee, and the determined Jharkhandi showed how driven he is to make the most of the second life. An international career that seemed lost due to disciplinary issues not very long ago, Kishan worked his way up through the domestic circuit and he blazed a trail against the Kiwis, scoring a fifty and then a century in the final game to total 215 runs in four matches. Given the rasping form he's in, he may well take Samson's spot when India open their T20 World Cup campaign against the USA in Mumbai come Saturday.

Abhishek yet again redefined the power-hitting template he borrowed from Rohit. Fearless to the core, he simply tore apart the Kiwis mercilessly in two games that saw the visitors examine his willow as if he's got a dynamite lodged inside.

Dube, once considered mostly a spin-basher, showed he's now more than capable of dealing with the pacers too in that smashing 23-ball 65 in the fourth game. The management has a lot more confidence in his bowling now, and that has bolstered his self-belief on the batting front too.

While positives are many, the continued poor run of Samson may force the think-tank to bench him at World Cup. Picked at the cost of former vice-captain Shubman Gill and handed the opening slot back again, the stage was all set for Kerallite, but he fumbled badly in the spotlight, managing scores of 10, 6, 0, 24, and 6. Yes, sometimes he hasn't got the right treatment, moved up and down the order constantly, but that's the case with many in Indian cricket.

Key forces in India's sensational T20 run have been Chakravarthy and Kuldeep. Both are unorthodox and have the ability to pick wickets in the crucial middle overs. Both, though, looked ragged against the Kiwis, who have learnt to play spin in India really well. They could only bag four wickets each and conceded over nine runs an over. Injured Axar missing three games further compounded the problems.

India have about six days to iron out the chinks as they look to create history by becoming the first host to triumph in the T20 World Cup.

TOP-3 PERFORMERS

BATTING	M	R	HS	Avg	SR	100	50
Suryakumar Yadav	5	242	82*	80.66	196.74	0	3
Ishan Kishan	4	215	103	53.75	231.18	1	1
Abhishek Sharma	5	182	84	45.50	249.31	0	2

BOWLING	M	W	BBI	Avg	Econ
Arshdeep Singh	4	8	5/51	21.00	10.50
Axar Patel	2	4	3/33	18.75	10.00
Hardik Pandya	5	4	2/23	20.75	8.30

Winner Vijay Punjabi (left) and runner-up Akaash Ashok Kumar pose with their spoils.

Fighting Punjabi clinches tenpin title

BENGALURU, DHNS: Vijay Punjabi scored a come-from-behind victory to clinch the men's title at the K Damodar & Co 10th Karnataka State Tenpin Bowling Championship here on Sunday.

In the finals of the stepladder round, played based on the cumulative pinfall of two games, second seed Punjabi conceded a lead of 24 pins in game 1 (190-214) against top seed Akaash Ashok Kumar.

Vijay made a come back with 5 strikes in a row in Game 2 (217-179) to beat Akaash (407-393) by 14 pins to clinch the title.

Final standings: Vijay Punjabi, 1; Akaash Ashok Kumar, 2; Shanmugananda, 3; Parvez Ahmed, 4.
Special prizes: Highest average in a 6-game block: Akaash Ashok Kumar (217.00); **Maximum number of scores above 225:** Shanmugananda (5 scores).

Advani advances to knockout stages

BENGALURU, DHNS: Defending champion Pankaj Advani rallied in fine fashion to put it across Sri Lanka's Mohamed Thaha Irshath 4-3 and move into the knockout stages of the Asian Snooker Championships here on Sunday.

The Indian ace, a three-time champion, won both his matches to top three-player Group 'A'. Advani, who outclassed Oman's Ahmed Bashir 4-0 in a late-night match on Saturday, had to dig deep into his reserves to down the Lankan cueist.

After dropping the opening frame of the best-of-seven frame match, Advani came up with a sizzling 140 break to level the scores. The 40-year-old took the next frame as well to go 2-1 up. But the Irshath fought back splendidly to take the next two. Unfortunately, the Lankan couldn't quite maintain the same tempo against his experienced rival.

Karnataka pull off a heist to enter quarters

BENGALURU, DHNS

There are red-ball games that start slow, shift gears on the final day and finish with a lot of excitement. This one was a prime example.

A slow-moving Ranji Trophy Elite Group B fixture between Karnataka and Punjab picked up serious pace on the fourth afternoon at the IS Bindra Stadium in Mohali as Devdutt Padikkal's (120 n.o., 85b, 6x4, 5x6) eighth first-class hundred saw Karnataka pull off a heist, chasing a 250-run target in just 27.5 overs to punch their quarterfinals ticket.

Karnataka finished second in Group B with 27 points in seven matches, picking up three wins, three draws and one loss while Madhya Pradesh topped the group with 28 points.

Karnataka will now face Mumbai in the fourth quarterfinal, starting on February 6.

It was also a brilliant way to start a new captaincy era, with thoughts of Mayank Agarwal's sacking slowly being erased after a tough defeat at the hands of MP in Alur that put their qualification in jeopardy.

Chasing 250 in just 40 overs, Karnataka pressed the trigger with Padikkal promoting himself to open with KL Rahul (13, 12b, 2x4).

Karnataka suffered an early jolt as Sukhdeep Bajwa (1/81) dismissed Rahul in the third over.

However, it was the skipper and former skipper Agarwal (53, 36b, 6x4, 1x6) who held the fort and stitched a 76-ball 113. After Agarwal walked back, Karnataka suffered a few tense moments with Aneesh KV (1) and Smaran R (1) walking back within three balls.

Padikkal and Shreyas Gopal (33, 22b, 3x4, 1x6) then steadied the ship with a 67-run stand before Vidyadhar Patil (14 n.o., 10b, 1x6) saw through the chase, Karnataka reaching 252/5.

Earlier, resuming the day on 119/3, Punjab skipper Uday Saharan (93, 166b, 7x4, 3x6) who was on 66 overnight, missed out of a well-deserved third first-class hundred by seven runs after being knocked over by left-arm orthodox Shikhar Shetty (2/82).

The captain, along with Anmolpreet Singh (44, 141b, 3x4, 1x6), stitched a gritty 89-run partnership, batting for 203 deliveries and eating up Karnataka's precious time.

Shreyas Gopal (3/43) picked up two wickets in two overs, sending Anmolpreet and wicketkeeper-bat Anmol Malhotra (16, 26, 1x4, 1x6) in quick succession before the lunch break.

With two sessions still to be played, the hosts were 210/6, leading Karnataka by 203. Showcasing urgency in their body language post lunch, India international Prasidh Krishna (3/49) along with the young Vidyadhar Patil (1/32) finished off the tail, bringing the shutters down on Punjab's innings on 256 all out in 101 overs.

Skipper Devdutt Padikkal led from the front with a brilliant hundred to help Karnataka beat Punjab by five wickets and seal their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal spot. PTI FILE PHOTO

QUARTERFINALS

- Mumbai vs Karnataka
- Bengal vs Andhra
- Madhya Pradesh vs J&K
- Jharkhand vs Uttarakhand
- Note: Quarterfinals will be played from Feb 6-10.

SCOREBOARD

PUNJAB (I Innings): 309 all out.
KARNATAKA (I Innings) 316 all out.
PUNJAB (II Innings O/n:119/3): Abhijeet Garg c Prasidh b Shreyas 33 (68b, 4x4), Prabhsimran Singh lbw Shikhar 11 (18b, 2x4), Uday Saharan b Shikhar 93 (166b, 7x4, 3x6), Jashanpreet Singh c Rahul b Mohsin 5 (34b), Anmolpreet Singh c Smaran b Gopal 44 (141b, 1x4, 1x6), Emanjot Singh Chahal b Prasidh 11 (16b, 2x4), Harpreet Brar c Kruthik b Prasidh 29 (72b, 3x4), Ayush Goyal c Rahul b Vidyadhar 7 (46b, 1x4), Sukhdeep Singh Bajwa c Shreyas b Prasidh 1 (19b), Anmoljeet Singh (not out) 0 (1b). Extras (B-4, LB-1, NB-1) 6. **TOTAL (all out, 101 overs) 256.**
Fall of wickets: 1-17 (Prabhsimran), 2-70 (Abhijeet), 3-87 (Jashanpreet), 4-176 (Saharan), 5-202 (Anmoljeet), 6-209 (Anmol), 7-215 (Emanjot), 8-237 (Ayush), 9-252 (Sukhdeep).
Bowling: Shikhar Shetty 33-8-82-2, Vidyadhar Patil 12-2-32-1, Prasidh Krishna 16-5-49-3, Shreyas Gopal 21-6-43-3, Mohsin Khan 19-5-45-1.
KARNATAKA (II Innings): KL Rahul c Anmolpreet b Bajwa 13 (12b, 2x4), Devdutt Padikkal (not out) 120 (85b, 6x4, 5x6), Mayank Agarwal b Emanjot, KV Aneesh c Anmol b Anmoljeet 1 (3b), Smaran R c Jashanpreet b Emanjot 1 (2b), Shreyas Gopal c Anmol b Anmoljeet 33 (22b, 3x4, 1x6), Vidyadhar Patil (not out) 14 (10b, 1x6). Extras (B-6, LB-4, W-6, NB-1) 17. **TOTAL (for 5 wkts, 27.5 overs) 252.**
Fall of wickets: 1-17 (Rahul), 2-130 (Agarwal), 3-133 (Aneesh), 4-134 (Smaran), 5-201 (Shreyas).
Bowling: Sukhdeep Singh Bajwa 8.5-0-81-1, Harpreet Brar 6-0-55-0, Anmoljeet Singh 9-0-66-2, Emanjot Singh Chahal 4-0-40-2.
Result: Karnataka won by 5 wkts.
PoM: Devdutt Padikkal.
Other Elite Group B brief scores: At Porvorim: Goa: 355 all out & (O/n: 18/0) 199 all out in 53.3 overs (Lalit Yadav 27, Amulya Pandrekar 32, Darshan Misal 55; Ankit Sharma 3-55, MD Nidheesh 5-47) lt to Kerala: 526/9 decl in 135 overs (Rohan Kunnummal 153, Abhishek Nair 32, Sachin Baby 37, Salman Nizar 52, Vishnu Vinod 113, Ahammed Imran 31, Ankit Sharma 36; Arjun Tendulkar 2-109, Lalit Yadav 3-112, Amulya Pandrekar 3-89). **Kerala: 6; Goa: 0.**

Delhi huff and puff into Eliminator

Laura, Jemimah star in nervy run chase against UPW

VADODARA, PTI

Delhi Capitals huffed and puffed but eventually got over the line in a modest run-chase by five wickets to beat UP Warriorz and make their way into the Eliminator clash of the Women's Premier League here on Sunday.

Delhi's win, with five wickets and eight balls to spare, also knocked out the defending champions Mumbai Indians from the race to the WPL playoffs.

Delhi Capitals, who have featured in each of the three WPL finals so far but never got over the line, will face an upbeat Gujarat Giants in the Eliminator here at the Baroda Cricket Association Stadium on Tuesday. The winner will face Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Thursday. Chasing 123, DC scored 126/5 after slipping from 84 for one to 101 for five.

Skipper Jemimah Rodrigues (34 n.o.) and Niki Prasad (4 n.o.) were on the crease when the winning runs of the low-scoring contest were hit. Shafali Verma scored a patient 29 while Laura Wolvaardt hit a 36-ball 47 with seven fours to anchor Delhi's run chase after they restricted UPW to 122 for eight.

Brief scores: UP Warriorz: 122/8 in 20 overs (Chinelle Henry 2-25, Marizanne Kapp 3-30, Shree Charani 2-22) lt to Delhi Capitals: 126/5 in 18.4 overs (Shafali Varma 29, Laura Wolvaardt 47, Jemimah Rodrigues 34; Deepti Sharma 2-27) by 5 wkts.
PoM: Marizanne Kapp

PLAYOFFS

- Eliminator (Feb 3): Gujarat Giants vs Delhi Capitals.
- Final (Feb 5): RCB vs Winner of Eliminator

Women's Premier League Points Table

Teams	P	W	L	NRR	Pts
RCB (Q)	8	6	2	+1.247	12
GG (Q)	8	5	3	-0.168	10
DC (Q)	8	4	4	-0.055	8
MI	8	3	5	+0.059	6
UPW	8	2	6	-1.076	4

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UNION BUDGET 2026

> The simplified Income Tax Rules and Forms will be notified shortly, giving adequate time to taxpayers to acquaint themselves with its requirements.

EXPENDITURE OF MAJOR ITEMS

Transport	Rural Development	Home Affairs	Agriculture and Allied Activities	Education	Energy	Health	Urban Development	IT and Telecom	Commerce and Industry	Social Welfare	Scientific Departments	Tax Administration	External Affairs
5,98,520 (Rs in Crore)	2,73,108	2,55,234	1,62,671	1,39,289	1,09,029	1,04,599	85,522	74,560	70,296	62,362	55,756	45,500	22,119

FM hikes Securities Transaction Tax in F&O trade P2 | Green push: Fillip for energy transition plans P4 | Big focus on AI, upskilling youth to create jobs P4 | Centre eyes tier-2, tier-3 growth via city economic regions P6 | VB-G RAM G pockets more than MGNREGS P7

By invitation

PRITI ARORA
President, Crisil Intelligence

Sowing the seeds of prosperity

The Union Budget 2026-27 focuses on four interlinked priorities for agriculture: productivity, quality, climate resilience and sustained income.

The first of these is improving productivity, getting more out of the same land.

Stagnant cultivated area and an increase in per capita income, from Rs 24,000 in fiscal 2005 to Rs 1.84 lakh in fiscal 2024, have turned productivity into the agricultural sector's focus area. While total output remains solid, key crops lag global benchmarks: cotton (-24 %), maize (-26.6%) and tomato (-59%).

In a technology push, the budget lifts the Namo Drone Didi allocation sevenfold to Rs 676 crore, moving drones from pilot programmes to large-scale services that sharpen input timing and reduce waste.

Bharat VISTAR receives Rs 150 crore to blend artificial intelligence (AI)-driven advisories with AgriStack and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) data.

On the livestock front is a two-pronged plan. One part targets milk yields, seeking to raise the average from 3-5 litres per day to the global range of 7-8 litres.

The second priority looks to go beyond volume-led growth to quality.

Horticulture now generates 369 million metric ton (MMT) of output (more than foodgrain at 354 MMT), yet post-harvest losses erode earnings.

The budget hikes funding for the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PM-FME) and PM Kisan Sampada Yojana by roughly 13% and 41% respectively, directing money to micro-food-processing units, pack-houses, ripening chambers and refrigerated transport.

The third priority is climate resilience, with preparations for riskier weather regimes.

The Bharat VISTAAR (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources) advisory platform will deliver hyper-local, climate-smart recommendations to marginal growers, helping them adjust sowing dates, crop choices and input use in real time.

Rare earth corridors to cut import dependence

Looking Ahead Hubs in mineral-rich states to build supply chain for magnets critical to EVs, clean energy

SNV SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS

A lithium-ion battery for electric vehicles.

India remains 100% import-dependent for several critical minerals vital to its clean energy transition, advanced manufacturing, defence technologies and high-tech ambitions — especially with 85-90% reliance on China for rare earth elements (REEs).

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced Rare Earth Corridors in mineral-rich states, including Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, and Kerala, to build a robust domestic ecosystem for mining, processing, research and manufacturing of rare earth permanent magnets.

These corridors build on the Centre's 'Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnets', launched in November 2025 with a Rs 7,280 crore outlay. They aim to slash import dependence by creating a full domestic supply chain for magnets essential to electric vehicles (EVs), wind turbines, mobile phones, defence equipment and advanced electronics.

Globally third

India holds an estimated 7.23 million tonnes of rare earth oxides—ranking third globally after China and Brazil—and 11.93 million tonnes of monazite in beach sands containing 55-65% REEs. Yet its global production share is under 1%, despite rich deposits in the coastal areas of TN, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala, Gujarat, and Maharashtra, according to strategic forum CUTS International. As of September 2025, Indian Rare Earths Ltd (IREL) remains the country's sole refiner, highlighting a critical bottleneck in technology and entrepreneurship.

China's dominance in the REE value chain also poses a major geopolitical risk, potentially disrupting India's industrial base and clean energy goals during tensions. The four states offer ideal conditions: coastal mineral belts, ports, industrial zones and infrastructure for processing and export.

However, experts say the budget lacks details on operationalising these corridors.

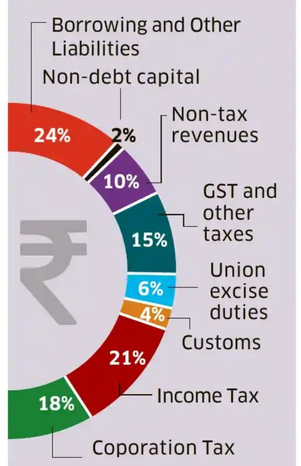
"Enhancing, securing, and fostering India's rare earth corridors demands coordinated legal, policy, fiscal, regulatory and administrative efforts," said Vishnu Sudarsan, Partner at JSA Advocates and Solicitors.

"Success hinges on interlocking reforms like removing monazite and beach sand minerals from the Atomic Energy Act's purview, allowing private and joint-venture mining under strict licensing and radiation controls, with mandatory government custody of thorium byproducts. A new chapter in the MMDR Act could create a 'critical and strategic minerals' category with longer tenures, accelerated allocation, and royalty structures rewarding downstream processing over raw extraction," Sudarsan told *DH*.

He added that CRZ and EIA rules must treat rare earth corridors as strategic infrastructure for controlled coastal mining, with project-specific approvals, monitoring and remediation. "SEZ-style incentives, GST and duty rationalisation, and export controls should prioritise domestic processing. Coordinated Centre-state efforts on land acquisition, taxation and facilitation will boost investor confidence," he added.

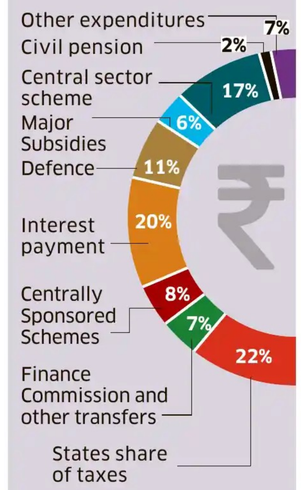
Rupee Comes from

(Figures in %)



Rupee Goes to

(Figures in %)



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Himachal	Kashmir	Sikkim Darjeeling	Leh Ladakh	Nainital	Nepal & Bhutan
₹28,000 - 63,000*	₹38,000 - 1,02,000*	₹45,000 - 69,000*	₹42,000 - 66,000*	₹42,000 - 61,000*	₹82,000 - 1,02,000*
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UNION BUDGET FINANCE

The 21st Century is technology-driven. Adoption of technology is for the benefit of all people - farmers in the field, women in STEM, youth keen to upskill and Divyangjan to access newer opportunities.

Voices

Given the current strength of bank's balance sheet historically driven by resolution of large NPA situations and retail loan growth, banks will now focus significantly on loan growth towards infra and capex, MSME and manufacturing especially in the 7 strategic and frontier sectors.

SANJAY DOSHI
Partner and Head, Transaction Services and Financial Services Advisory, KPMG

The Indian Union Budget 26-27 signals a decisive focus on accelerating and sustaining the growth momentum towards Viksit Bharat ambition, by investing in empowering & enabling our youth, the MSME's and the manufacturing sector in particular, while continuing fiscal prudence. Together with the next gen reforms like GST2.0, the new IT Act, the new labour codes, etc and several important FTAs, there is a decisive shift in India's engagement with global capital by offering greater certainty and long-term policy clarity.

KAMAL BALI
President & MD, Volvo Group India

Financial Sector

1. Setting up of **High-Level Committee** on Banking for **Viksit Bharat** to align with India's next growth phase
2. Incentive of **Rs 100 crore** for single issuance of municipal bonds of more than Rs1,000 crore. Current Scheme under AMRUT will continue
3. Restructuring **Power Finance Corporation** (PFC) and Rural **Electrification Corporation** (REC)
4. Comprehensive Review of the **Foreign Exchange Management** (FEMA) (Nondebt Instruments) Rules
5. **Introduction of Market-making framework** and total return swaps on **corporate bonds**

All the provisions have been made for the common people only. If those in the opposition do not consider themselves common people, what can we do? Asserting that the Budget for 2026-27 is focused on growth and development, the minister said, "The country is happy. I believe there is no scope to criticise this Budget. Still, if someone criticises it, it must be politically motivated.

KIREN RIJIJU, Union minister

FM hikes Securities Transaction Tax in F&O trade

Move aims to protect small investors, reduce systemic risk in the derivatives market

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has proposed to raise the STT (Securities Transaction Tax) on Futures to 0.05%, from the present 0.02%. "STT on options premium and exercise of options are both proposed to be raised to 0.15% from the present rate of 0.1% and 0.125%, respectively," she said. This move is aimed at discouraging small traders from speculative trading in derivatives.

Experts said this steep increase in STT, coming on top of last year's hike, will raise impact costs for traders, hedgers and arbitrageurs. "This could cool derivative activity and lead to a reduction in volumes. The intent appears to be volume moderation rather than revenue maximisation, as any potential revenue gain could be offset by lower derivative volumes," Shripal Shah, MD & CEO, Kotak Securities, said.

At a post-Budget conference, Sitharaman said that the government wants small investors to stay away from the speculative F&O market.

Revenue Secretary Arvind Shrivastava said only change in STT is in F&O and that all other STT rates remain the same. He said the increase in the STT rate is to reduce systemic risk in the derivatives market. ClearTax Founder & CEO Archit Gupta said the Budget's hike in STT, by 150% on Futures and 50% on Options, sends a clear signal: the government wants to slow down excessive short-term trading.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at a press meet in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

Even though STT collections stayed flat at around Rs 45,000 crore (from FY24-25 to FY25-26) against a Rs 78,000 crore target, the bigger story lies in the investor behaviour. Retail participation hasn't fallen; it has evolved, Gupta said. Also, the disinvestment target has been raised sharply to Rs 80,000 crore from Rs 30,000 crore, earlier.

Amisha Vora, Chairperson & Managing Director, PL Capital – Prabhudas Lilladher, said buyback tax has been reduced, and the long-pending MAT (Minimum Alternate Tax) credit issue has been addressed. "The increase in PMS investment limits for NRIs to 24% from 5-10% is a strong positive for capital flows. Most importantly, government capex is up 24%, which is huge, and defence spending has increased by 21%. The only real negative in the Budget is the increase in STT on derivatives, and that's what the market is reacting to in the short term. Overall, once the STT headline settles, the Budget should be seen as growth supportive," he said.

To disincentivise misuse of tax arbitrage, promoters now need to pay an additional buyback tax. "This will make the effective tax 22% for corporate promoters. For non-corporate promoters, the effective tax will be 30%," Sitharaman said.

Changes in taxation of buyback were brought in to address the improper use of the buyback route by promoters.

By invitation

PRABHAKAR K S
The author is founder & CEO, Shree Tax Chambers

Less taxing times for taxpayers

As per an initial reading of the Union Budget 2026, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has tried hard to make life easier for common taxpayers.

Income Tax Return due dates

For the last few years, June to September was the most difficult period for both taxpayers and tax professionals as they were unable to file I-T Returns due to the I-T department portal's technical glitches.

Fortunately, it has been proposed to stagger the timeline for filing the income tax returns. For individuals with ITR-1 and ITR-2 returns, the deadline of July 31 continues. In the case of non-audit business cases or trusts, an August 31 deadline has been proposed instead of July 31.

Similarly, the due date forrevised returnshas been proposed to be extended from the current December 31 to March 31 of the next year with a nominal fee.

Collection of tax at source

It has been proposed to reduce the TCS rate from 5% to 2% for LRS remittances made specifically for educational and medical purposes. Also, it has been proposed to reduce the TCS rate on the sale of overseas tour packages from 5% to 2%.

Buyback of shares

It has been proposed to tax share buybacks as capital gains for all categories of shareholders. This will align buyback returns with the capital gains regime and remove arbitrage between dividends and buybacks. Alignment comes with differential effective tax rates - 22% for corporate promoters and 30% for others.

Lower tax deduction

For small taxpayers, a rule-based automated process has been proposed. It will enable obtaining a lower or nil deduction certificate without filing an application with the assessing officer. This measure will reduce the compliance burden on small taxpayers.

Disclosure of foreign assets

A six-month foreign asset disclosure window for small taxpayers has been proposed. The latest proposal will help small taxpayers to declare their undisclosed assets and come clean.

The Union Budget 2026 is one of the best in recent years. The Finance Minister and her team have honestly tried their best to reduce the compliance burden for the middle class, senior citizens, decriminalise procedural lapses and rationalise penalty provisions.

Import barriers lowered to counter Trump's tariffs

Govt extends basic customs duty exemption on import of goods for nuclear projects

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday announced a series of customs duty-related restructuring, including cutting taxes on all dutiable goods imported for personal use from 20% to 10%, and allowing duty-free import of raw materials for manufacturing of aircraft and engines, a move that would improve market access for American companies to India.

In the Union Budget 2026-27, Sitharaman also announced to extend the existing basic customs duty exemption on import of goods required for nuclear power projects till 2035, and expand it for all nuclear plants irrespective of their capacity.

Components and parts required for the manufacture of civilian, training and other aircraft will be allowed to be imported duty-free. The Budget has also proposed to exempt basic customs duty on raw materials imported for manufacture of aircraft parts to be used in maintenance, repair, or overhaul (MRO) requirements by units in the defence sector.

"To continue weeding out long-continuing customs duty exemptions, I propose to remove certain exemptions on items which are being manufactured in India or where the imports are negligible," Sitharaman said in the Budget speech.

According to analysts, lowering of import duty would help ease trade tension with the US. The Trump administration has imposed a steep 50% tariff on imports of the majority of Indian products. While 25% of this is punitive tariff for India's economic engagement with Russia, another 25% is referred to as reciprocal tariff. The Trump administration has accused India of imposition of high tariffs on American products.

"The Budget's tariff exemptions align with US strengths in aerospace, nuclear technology, clean energy equipment, electronics, and medical devices — quietly improving market access for US firms to India," said Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) Founder Ajay Srivastava.

In nuclear energy, zero customs duty on nuclear-generation equipment, absorber rods, and project imports for all registered nuclear plants until 2035 provides rare long-term certainty for US nuclear equipment-makers and technology providers, he added.

To provide relief to patients, particularly those suffering from cancer, the Budget proposes to exempt basic customs duty on 17 drugs or medicines. The Budget also proposes to add seven more rare diseases for the purpose of exempting import duties on personal imports of drugs, medicines and Food for Special Medical Purposes (FSMP) used in their treatment.

The FM has also sought to provide relief to the sectors like textiles, leather and seafood.

Duty-free import limit for inputs used in seafood processing is proposed to be increased from 1% to 3% of export value. It will help lower costs.

Centre's expenditure (In Rs. Crore)

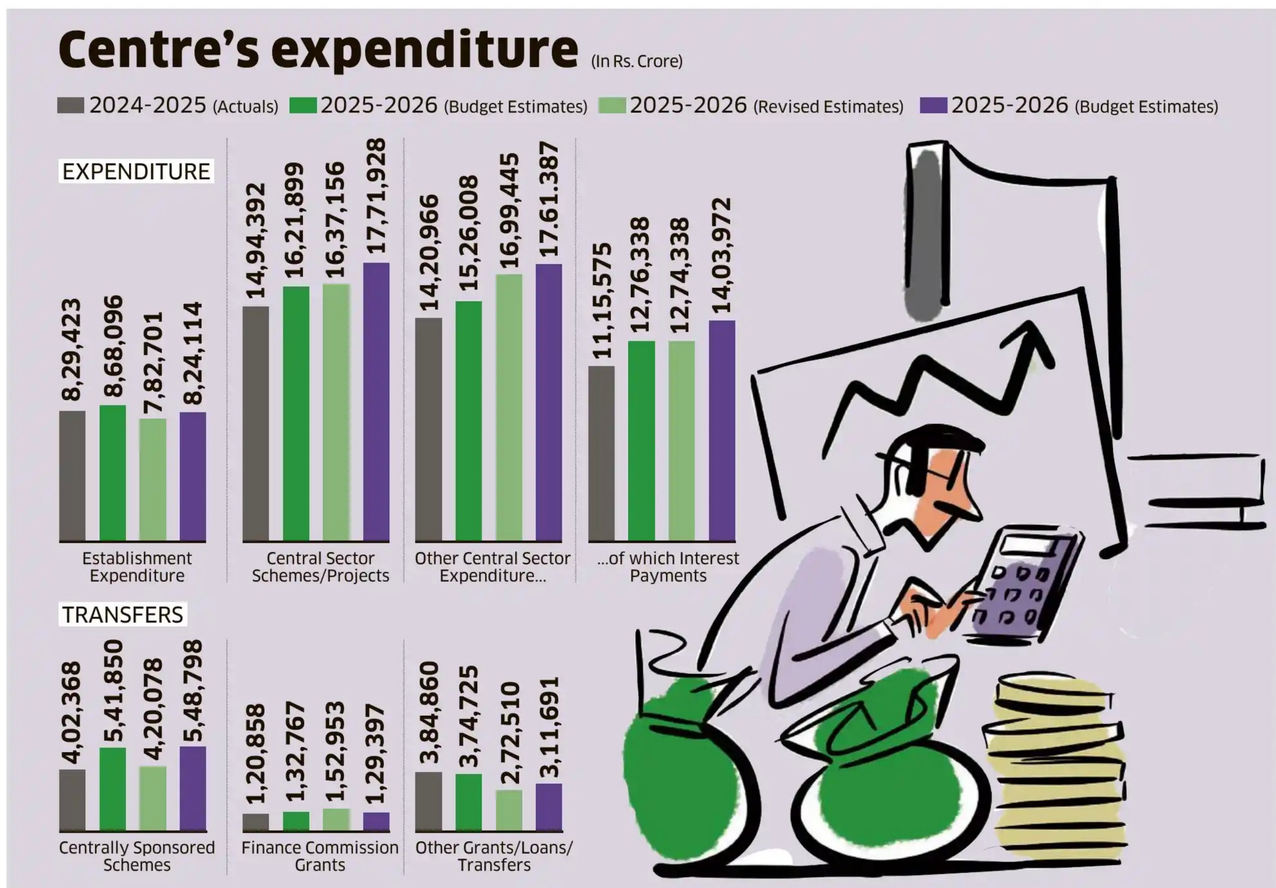


ILLUSTRATION: SAJITH KUMAR

Tax holiday till 2047 for data centres in India

The government expects investment in data centres to cross $200 bn, about Rs 18.33L cr

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

In a major boost to foreign cloud companies, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has proposed to provide a tax holiday till 2047 to any foreign company that provides cloud services to customers globally by using data centre services from the country.

"It will, however, need to provide services to Indian customers through an Indian reseller entity," Sitharaman said during her Budget speech on Sunday.

The Budget also proposed to provide a safe harbour of 15% on cost, in case the company providing data centre services from India is a related entity.

Earlier, the Economic Survey 2025-26 highlighted huge growth opportunities in data centres. Despite generating nearly 20% of the world's data, India hosts only about 3% of global data centres, around 150 out of 11,000 worldwide. This indicates a significant opportunity for the country in developing data centres.

The tax holiday for global cloud providers using India-based data centres until 2047, strengthens the digital infrastructure ecosystem that GCCs increasingly depend on for AI, data, cybersecurity and platform engineering work, said Srinivasan Sarvabhouman, CFO, ANSR.

Also, the FM announced that India is a global leader in software development services, IT-enabled services, knowledge process outsourcing services and contract R&D services relating to software development. "These business segments are quite interconnected with each other. All these services are proposed to be clubbed under a single category, Information Technology Services, with a common safe harbour margin of 15.5% applicable to all," she said.

Venkatraman Narayanan, MD, Happiest Minds Technologies, said the focus on cloud and data centre infrastructure, supported by long-term tax incentives and safe harbour clarity, further strengthens India's attractiveness as a global base for digital and AI-led services. The consolidation of IT and IT-enabled services into a unified sector complements this vision by improving ease of doing business and policy predictability.

Rajesh Varrier, President – Global Operations & Chairman and Managing Director, Cognizant India, said the budget sends a clear signal that India is doubling down on its role as a global technology and services powerhouse. The recognition of IT services as a unified category, along with enhanced safe-harbour thresholds, brings much-needed certainty and predictability to the industry — allowing companies to shift their focus from compliance to innovation, client outcomes, and long-term value creation.

Lenders welcome extension of GIFT City tax sops

SBI chief says Budget maintains policy continuity, tax predictability and attempts to balance between the rural and urban, as also legacy and sunrise sectors

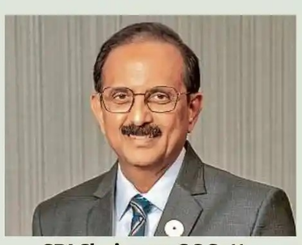
MUMBAI, PTI

Lenders on Sunday welcomed the Budget proposals such as a high-level committee to look into the banking sector in future and also the extension of the tax holiday for GIFT City operations.

State Bank of India Chairman C S Setty, who is also the chairman of industry body IBA, said the Budget maintains policy continuity, tax predictability and attempts to balance between the rural and urban, as also legacy and sunrise sectors.

"Financing aspect of Viksit Bharat has been elaborately addressed with measures such as Committee on Banking, Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund, recycling of CPSE real estate assets and extension of tax holiday for GIFT City," Setty said.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the formation of a High-Level Committee which will undertake a comprehensive review of the sector and align it with India's next phase of growth. A detailed document also extended the tax holiday for GIFT City operations for 20 years from the present 10 years. However, there was no further commentary on the bank consolidation plan in the budget, while a higher-than-expected gross borrowing at over Rs 17 lakh crore led to fears of a crowding out and led to the BSE sectoral benchmark Bankex closing 2.73% down at Sunday's specially conducted trade.



SBI Chairman C S Setty

Setty said the small businesses will benefit from the government proposals in the budget including setting up of a dedicated SME Growth fund and the mandate on Trade Receivables Exchange backed by credit guarantee support.

Bank of Baroda's chief general manager for MSME Lending, Madhur Kumar, said the budget signals a clear shift toward structural strengthening of MSME financing, with banks placed at the centre of execution.

The proposal on trade receivables will improve cash-flow visibility, shorten working-capital cycles, and enable safer, receivable-backed lending rather than collateral-heavy approaches, Kumar added.

The Rs 10,000-crore SME Growth Fund was welcomed by Yes Bank's managing director and chief executive Prashant Kumar, who lauded the Budget for focusing on harnessing the demographic dividends and also the services sector.

"While the hopes of a bumper resource generation year were limited with the growth in FY27 pragmatically assumed at 10%, the FM achieved the objectives of reducing both the public debt and the fiscal deficits as % of GDP, thereby sticking to the roadmap of fiscal consolidation," he added.

IN BRIEF

Strengthening of Advance Pricing Agreement

Nasscom said the Budget's proposal to fast track unilateral APAs (Advance Pricing Agreements) for IT services, with an endeavour to conclude them within two years and a limited extension window, directly addresses long-standing concerns around timelines. The extension of the modified return facility to associated entities where income changes arise due to an APA is particularly relevant, as it supports smoother implementation of group-level outcomes.

Penalties for crypto reporting lapses from April

The Budget stresses the importance of accurate and timely reporting of crypto-asset transactions. To ensure compliance and create a deterrence for furnishing inaccurate information in respect of crypto assets, the Budget has proposed a penalty provision. "Penalty of Rs 200 per day for non-furnishing of statement and Rs 50,000 for furnishing inaccurate particulars and failure to correct such inaccuracy is proposed to be levied," it mentioned.

Shipping, logistics sector gives thumbs up to Budget

Shipping and logistics industry on Sunday said the Budget presents a comprehensive macro framework that addresses near-term growth priorities. "The government's six-point intervention plan in the areas of manufacturing, MSMEs, infrastructure, security, and city economic regions provides the foundation for a more inclusive, resilient, and future-ready economy," Shashi Kiran Shetty, Founder and Chairman of logistics operator Allcargo Group, said.

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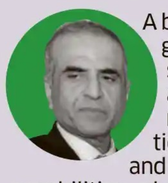
Travel period: 11th Feb 2026 to 31st Dec 2026

*T&Cs apply. Fares mentioned are starting international return & domestic one-way fares, all-inclusive.
^Valid on travel from 1st April 2026 onwards. Changes permitted up to 72 hours before departure. Fare difference applies.

UNION
BUDGET
NEW ECONOMY

Today, we face an external environment in which trade and multilateralism are imperilled and access to resources and supply chains are disrupted.

Voices



A bold Budget that combines growth with inclusion. The strong emphasis on skilling, alongside sustained investments in science, innovation, and research are timely and will strengthen domestic capabilities, advancing import substitution in critical sectors.

SUNIL BHARTI MITTAL,
Founder & Chairman, Bharti Enterprises

The Budget clearly articulates the government's vision to promote the Indian IT services sector as a primary driver of India's economic growth, leveraging AI as the force multiplier. By identifying AI as central to accelerating and sustaining economic growth, the government underscores its strategy to establish India as an AI-powered economic superpower.

APARNA IYER,
CFO, Wipro Limited

Budget Highlights

1. **Tax holiday** up to **2047** to any foreign company which provides services to any part of the world outside India
2. To provide **safe harbour** to non-residents for component warehousing in a **bonded warehouse**
3. Scheme for **Rare Earth Permanent Magnets**, research, mining, processing and manufacturing
4. Strengthening **manufacturing** of high value and technologically advanced **Construction Equipment**
5. To set up three **Dedicated Chemical Parks**, enhancing domestic production

On the big-picture issues, there was nothing that we could hear for the middle class and the lower middle class. There was nothing there for the states. In fact, fiscal devolution remains unchanged at 41 per cent, and many states have complained that they don't have enough to fulfil their own obligations to their citizens.

SHASHI THAROOR,
Congress MP

Green push: Fillip for energy transition plans

Customs duty exemptions for lithium-ion batteries and sodium antimonate proposed

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Aimed at accelerating energy transition and enhancing energy security, the Centre has proposed customs duty exemptions for lithium-ion batteries used in battery energy storage systems (BESS) and sodium antimonate used in solar glass manufacturing.

"I propose to extend the basic customs duty exemption given to capital goods used for manufacturing lithium-ion cells for batteries to those used for manufacturing lithium-ion cells for battery energy storage systems as well," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.

She also proposed to exempt basic customs duty on the import of sodium antimonate for use in the manufacture of solar glass. Currently, a 7.5% basic customs duty is levied on sodium antimonate.

The Finance Minister further announced a scheme to promote Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) with an outlay of Rs 20,000 crore.

The Budget outlay for the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has been set at Rs 32,911 crore, of which more than Rs 30,000 crore is allocated for solar energy, underscoring the government's strong push for renewable energy.

The government has increased the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) allocation for the automobile industry to Rs 5,939 crore in 2026-27 to support the domestic production of electric vehicles (EVs).

The PLI scheme, aimed at boosting production of EVs and EV components, was allocated Rs 2,818 crore in 2025-26.

Union Renewable Energy Minister Pralhad Joshi said the Budget aims to accelerate grid-scale energy storage and enable seamless integration of renewable energy into the grid.

Better integration

He noted that by extending the Basic Customs Duty (BCD) exemption to capital goods used in the manufacturing of lithium-ion cells for batteries and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), the Budget will help scale up grid-scale energy storage and facilitate better integration of renewable energy.

Additionally, the exemption of BCD on sodium antimonate used in the manufacture of solar glass will further strengthen the domestic solar manufacturing ecosystem, Joshi said.

Together, these measures reflect a strong commitment to building a resilient, self-reliant, and sustainable energy future for India, he added.

"The government's strong focus on energy sustainability, with a Rs 20,000 crore outlay for carbon capture initiatives and duty reductions on select solar equipment components, reinforces India's commitment to a scalable, lower-carbon growth pathway," said Subahoo Chordia, CEO, EAAA Alternatives.

By invitation

RAJA LAHIRI
IT industry leader

A blueprint for full-stack tech economy

Union Budget 2026–27 marks a structural turning point for India's technology economy. Rather than approaching technology through isolated sectoral incentives, the Budget articulates a connected national strategy that treats technology as core economic infrastructure.

India is preparing to move beyond from being a large exporter of technology services to becoming a full-stack digital economy built on creating robust AI and digital infrastructure, domestic intellectual property, resilient supply chains, advanced manufacturing, and globally scalable digital infrastructure.

This shift is most clearly reflected in the launch of India Semiconductor Mission 2.0. The mission moves beyond the earlier focus on attracting fabrication facilities to building full ecosystem ownership across design, equipment, materials, and intellectual property.

The semiconductor push is reinforced by a Rs 40,000 crore expansion in electronics manufacturing support, but its importance lies less in scale and more in strategic intent.

Rather than prioritising assembly-led growth, the Budget directs investment toward high-value, technology-intensive manufacturing where competitiveness is driven by engineering depth and process innovation.

This is strengthened by the creation of dedicated rare-earth mineral corridors and domestic processing facilities.

As physical technology infrastructure is strengthened, the Budget simultaneously accelerates the development of digital and cognitive infrastructure.

Artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and scientific research are positioned as horizontal capabilities that cut across sectors rather than stand-alone initiatives.

The Budget introduces a meaningful structural reset for the IT and Global Capability Centre ecosystem by bringing software development, IT services, knowledge process outsourcing, and contract R&D under a single category of Information Technology Services. The importance of digital infrastructure is addressed with equal clarity.

Clearly, the game-changing moment was to provide tax holiday status till 2047 for companies who want to build Data Centres in India.

As AI adoption accelerates, the demand for data centres supported by reliable power, land, water, and connectivity will grow exponentially. By offering long-term certainty to global cloud providers and data centre operators, India is positioning itself not only as a hub for domestic data, but as a destination for global digital workloads.

Taken together, these measures reveal a deliberate technology architecture rather than a series of standalone announcements.

Big focus on AI, upskilling youth to create jobs

FM says 21st century is tech-driven and adoption of technology will benefit all

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Union Budget outlined a strong focus on emerging technologies, including AI, and upskilling youth to create a new range of skilled career pathways. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has proposed measures for upskilling and reskilling of technology professionals and engineers in AI and emerging technologies, and also proposed steps to be taken to attract skilled diaspora and foreign talent into the country.

The Budget's emphasis on large-scale capacity-building AI missions marks a structural shift in how India is preparing for an AI-driven economy, Mahesh Makhija, Leader and Partner, Technology Consulting, EY India, said.

"By prioritising talent development, research, compute infrastructure, data readiness, and mission-mode innovation together, the government is building the foundational layers for sustainable AI adoption rather than fragmented pilots. This integrated approach can accelerate productivity across industries, strengthen indigenous innovation, and make public services more responsive and efficient," he said.

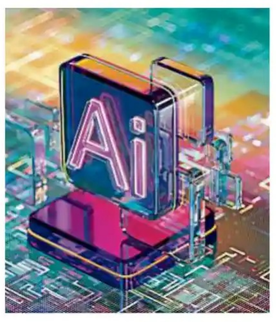
In her budget speech, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the 21st century is technology-driven and adoption of technology is for the benefit of all people — farmers in the field, women in STEM, youth keen to upskill and Divyangjan to access newer opportunities.

Also, during the press conference, she emphasised that technology should be utilised to benefit the common man.

Sachin Panicker, Chief AI Officer, Fulcrum Digital, said the Union Budget recognises that AI is no longer an experimental technology but a strategic lever for governance, productivity and economic growth. "It has specifically highlighted AI applications to enhance governance and introduced measures such as the AI Mission, National Quantum Mission and significant new funding through the Anusandhan National Research Foundation and the Research and Development and Innovation Fund," he said.

The country's service-led economy can get disrupted with strong gains in AI, and hence the government's focus on building India as a powerhouse of strong AI talent is a great step to retain our continued growth in the world economy, Ankur Mittal, Co-Founder, Inflection Point Ventures said.

"This will also increase a great flow of capital to India from global tech giants to take advantage of the talent pool while also supporting the Indian startup ecosystem," Mittal said.



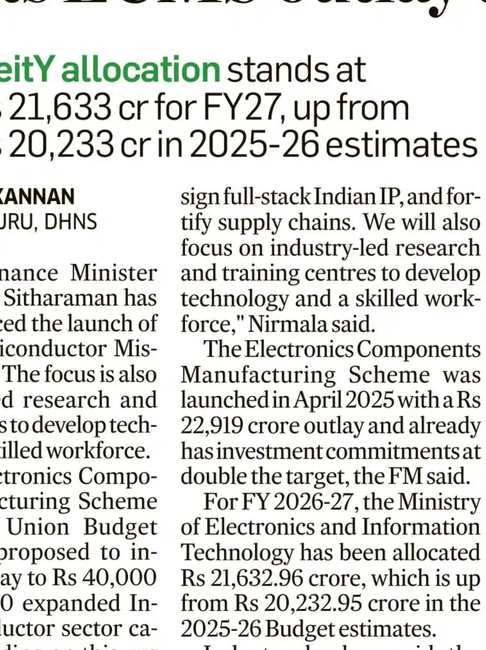
Sustaining Economic Growth

A strong intent to build a future-ready workforce

The Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme outlay increased to **Rs 40,000 crore** to capitalise on the momentum

India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 1.0 expanded India's semiconductor sector capabilities. Building on this, we will launch **ISM 2.0** to produce equipment and materials, design fullstack Indian IP, and fortify supply chains

Support the mineral-rich States of Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to establish dedicated Rare Earth Corridors to promote mining, processing, research and manufacturing



India's **Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming** and **Comics (AVGC)** sector is a growing industry, projected to require **2 million professionals** by 2030. To support the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies, Mumbai in setting up AVGC Content Creator Labs in **15,000 secondary schools** and **500 colleges**

ILLUSTRATION: SAJITH KUMAR

FM unveils Semiconductor Mission 2.0; boosts ECMS outlay to Rs 40k crore

MeitY allocation stands at Rs 21,633 cr for FY27, up from Rs 20,233 cr in 2025-26 estimates

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced the launch of the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 2.0. The focus is also on industry-led research and training centres to develop technology and a skilled workforce.

For the Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS), the Union Budget 2026-27 has proposed to increase the outlay to Rs 40,000 crore. "ISM 1.0 expanded India's semiconductor sector capabilities. Building on this, we will launch ISM 2.0 to produce equipment and materials, design full-stack Indian IP, and fortify supply chains. We will also focus on industry-led research and training centres to develop technology and a skilled workforce," Nirmala said.

The Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme was launched in April 2025 with a Rs 22,919 crore outlay and already has investment commitments at double the target, the FM said.

For FY 2026-27, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has been allocated Rs 21,632.96 crore, which is up from Rs 20,232.95 crore in the 2025-26 Budget estimates.

Industry leaders said the launch of ISM 2.0 represents a major milestone for India's technology manufacturing ambitions.

Rahul Garg, Founder & CEO, Moglix, said that by focusing on equipment manufacturing, materials, full-stack chip design, and domestic intellectual property, the programme addresses critical capability gaps. "The additional Rs 10,000 crore Shakti initiative and industry-led training centres will further strengthen the talent pipeline and supply-chain resilience, accelerating India's semiconductor self-reliance," he said.

In 2021, the Union Cabinet approved the India Semiconductor Mission with a Rs 76,000 crore outlay to boost fabrication, design, and manufacturing. Between 2023 and 2025, there has been a rapid setup of major facilities by domestic and foreign firms with significant investments. According to the government, the total approved projects under ISM reached 10, with cumulative investments of around Rs 1.60 lakh crore.

Lakshminarayanan Ramalingam, COO, Quest Global, said the expansion of the ISM 2.0, coupled with higher outlays and AI-focused research investments, reflects a clear understanding that long-term competitiveness in semiconductors will be driven by deep R&D, advanced skills, and indigenous IP creation rather than manufacturing alone.

Three 'kartavyas' to power MSME engines

Liquidity, equity and professional support to turn micro, small and medium enterprises into champions of India's growth story

SUMIT PANDE
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, presenting her ninth straight budget on Sunday, desisted from the conventional political munificence for five poll-bound states and instead focused on cushioning key manufacturing sectors, especially the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), from prevailing global economic uncertainties.

Calling MSEMs "vital engines of India's growth", Sitharaman announced the setting up of a Rs 10,000 crore dedicated growth fund aimed at incentivising small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The finance minister also proposed topping up the Self-Reliant India Fund, set up in 2021, with Rs 2,000 crore to support micro enterprises.

"We are inspired by three kartavyas," the minister said, "accelerate and sustain growth, fulfil aspirations and build capacity", proposing liquidity, equity and professional support for the MSME sector to "help them grow like champions".

MSMEs contributed about 30% to India's gross domestic product and 45% to exports in fiscal 2025, employing more than 32 crore people as of January 2026.

Sector boost

- **Rs 10,000 crore** dedicated growth fund announced for SMEs
- Self-Reliant India Fund topped up with **Rs 2,000 crore** for micro enterprises
- New cadre of para-professionals, **'Corporate Mitras'**, to assist MSMEs

To improve access and liquidity for MSMEs, the minister laid out a slew of measures to improve credit facilities by expanding the use of TReDS, an RBI-regulated electronic platform for invoice discounting by MSMEs.

The minister proposed that TReDS act as the chosen settlement platform for the purchases made by all central public sector enterprises from MSMEs. This process, she said, could also be emulated as a benchmark for transactions with other corporates.

"The FTAs signed by India in the recent past need to be effectively leveraged by MSMEs as they access the schemes announced in the budget, leading to the emergence of champions. A focused sector approach will be key to this," said Easwaran Subramanian, Partner, Deloitte India.

The government has also proposed to create a separate cadre of para-professionals called 'Corporate Mitra' to help MSMEs meet compliance requirements at an affordable cost.

"Credit access and receipt of timely payments have been major challenges for MSMEs over the years, with an estimated Rs 8.1 lakh crore locked in delayed payments, blocking working capital," said Pushan Sharma, Director, Crisil Intelligence.

IN BRIEF

Cess on pan masala to fetch Rs 14k crore

The government expects to garner Rs 14,000 crore from the health and national security cess levied on pan masala manufacturing. From Feb 1, health and national security cess is levied on pan masala, over and above the highest 40% GST rate. The Health and National Security Cess Act levies cess on the manufacturing capacity of pan masala units. The total tax incidence on pan masala, after taking into account 40% GST, will be retained at the current level of 88%.

1 lakh allied health professionals to be added

Around 1 lakh allied health professionals (AHPs) will be added across various disciplines, including optometry, radiology, anaesthesia and applied psychology, over the next five years. Finance minister said existing institutions for allied health professionals would be upgraded and new AHP institutions would be established in private and government sectors. This would create a new range of skilled career pathways for India's youth, she said.

Budget allocation for 'control of pollution' increases

The allocation for "control of pollution" schemes and projects, which includes funding for pollution control boards and the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), has increased in the Union Budget 2026-27. For 2026-27, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has been allocated Rs 3,759.46 crore, about Rs 278 crore or nearly 8% more than the 2025-26 budget estimate of Rs 3,481.61 crore.

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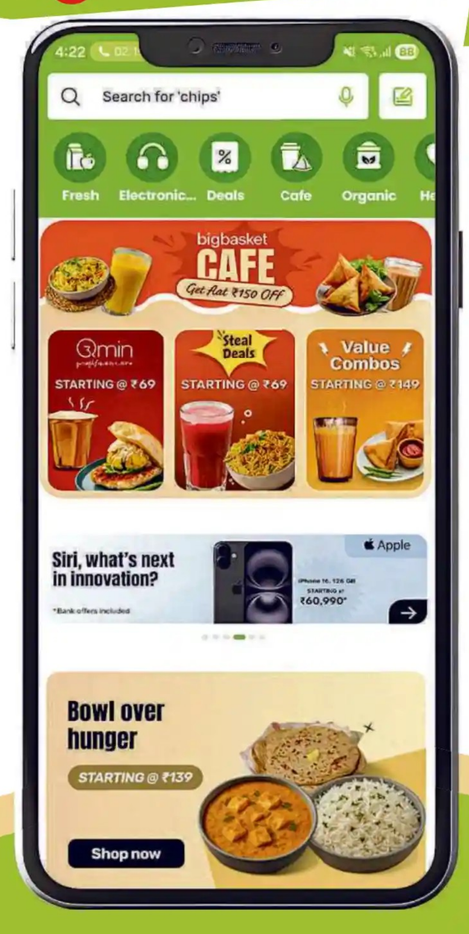

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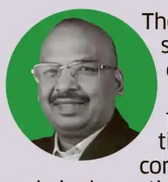
UNION
BUDGET
INFRASTRUCTURE

The tourism sector has the potential to play a large role in employment generation, forex earnings and expanding the local economy.

Voices

The decision to allow eligible SEZ manufacturing units to sell into the Domestic Tariff Area at concessional duty is a significant boost for companies that have created large-scale capacities in both the consumer and aerospace & defence sectors.

ARAVIND MELLIGERI
Executive Chairman & CEO, Aequs Limited

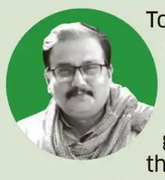


The Budget reinforces policy stability for renewable energy and manufacturing. The focus is clearly shifting from incentives to execution, scale, and quality. For companies that have invested early in domestic solar manufacturing, this consistency provides long-term confidence and greater visibility for planning and expansion.

DV MANJUNATHA
CMD, Emmvee Photovoltaic Power Limited

Budget Highlights

1. Recycling of **real estate assets of CPSEs through the setting up of dedicated REITs.**
2. Establishment of new **Dedicated Freight Corridors** connecting Dankuni in the East to Surat in the West.
3. Operationalising **20 new National Waterways** connecting mineral rich areas, industrial centres and ports.
4. Launch a **Coastal Cargo Promotion Scheme** to increase the share of inland waterways and coastal shipping from **6% to 12% by 2047.**
5. **Purvodaya:** Development of **Integrated East Coast Industrial Corridor.**



Today's Budget has once again failed to address the two most serious issues affecting the country's vast population – rapidly rising income inequality and alarming unemployment. Instead of grappling with these structural crises, the Budget has resorted to superficial measures and heavy rhetoric. This embellishment of words may create headlines for a day or two, but it cannot bring any change in the economic realities.

MANOJ JHA
RJD Rajya Sabha MP

Defence budget ups ante on modern arms, borders

Security push After success of Operation Sindoor, capital expenditure allocation up by 24%

KALYAN RAY,
NEW DELHI, DHNS

In a decisive push to strengthen security after Operation Sindoor, the defence sector was allocated Rs 7.85 lakh crore in the Union Budget, with nearly 22% hike in capital outlay, to enable the government buy key military hardware for modernising the forces.

The Defence Ministry's allocation of Rs 6.81 lakh crore in the last fiscal has been raised to Rs 7.85 lakh crore with a pension component of Rs 1.71 lakh crore.

The capital outlay for defence has been pegged at around Rs 2.19 lakh crore as against last fiscal's budgetary estimate of Rs 1.8 lakh crore.

Out of the total amount earmarked for capital outlay, Rs 1.85 lakh crore has been budgeted for capital acquisition. This is nearly 24% higher than the procurement budget for FY 2025-26.

"After the historic success of Operation Sindoor, this budget has intensified our efforts to further strengthen our defence. The overall allocation is more than 15% of what was earmarked last year," Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said.

Compared to last year's BE, the maximum allocation has been made in the categories of "aircraft and aero-engines" and "other equipment", both receiving a hike of over 30%.

During FY 2025-26, up to December 2025, the Defence Ministry has concluded contracts

worth Rs 2.10 lakh crore and has, so far, given Acceptance of Necessity approval for projects worth more than Rs 3.50 lakh crore.

The upcoming projects under capital acquisition will equip the forces with new fighter aircraft, smart and lethal weapons, ships/submarines, unmanned aerial vehicles, drones and specialist vehicles.

In line with the Defence Ministry's policy to boost domestic industries, nearly 75% of the procurement budget – Rs 1.39 lakh crore – has been set aside for domestic industries.

Sitharaman also proposed to exempt basic customs duty on raw materials imported for the manufacture of parts of aircraft to be used in maintenance, repair, or overhaul requirements by units in the defence sector.

Development of border infrastructure would continue to receive a push with the allocation for Border Roads Organisation enhanced to Rs 7,394 crore from Rs 7,146 crore in 2025-26, to cater to strategic projects like tunnels, bridges and airfields besides providing the last mile connectivity in border areas.

Rajnath said Rs 12,100 crore has been allocated to the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme, which is 45% higher than the BE of 2025-26. Also, the Defence research budget has been increased to over Rs 29,000 crore from last fiscal's allocation of Rs 27,000 crore.

By invitation

TCA RANGANATHAN
Former Chairman and Managing Director of EXIM Bank of India

Embracing the manufacturing strategy

India's GDP story is impressive. Growth has consistently outpaced global averages, reserves are strong, and India now ranks as the world's fifth-largest economy.

Yet even the recent Economic Survey urged a pause and reflection, re-emphasising that prosperity cannot rest on headline GDP numbers alone. Macroeconomic stability is not enough, and service exports, however valuable, cannot substitute for a strong manufacturing base. The Survey identified the central challenge as structural — building competitiveness at scale.

In a world where trade is weaponised and supply chains are instruments of state power, India must evolve from import substitution to strategic indispensability in global value chains.

The Union Budget 2026–27 presents a comprehensive "manufacturing-first" strategy by integrating industrial growth with specialised urban hubs, doubling the electronics outlay to Rs 40,000 crore and launching India Semiconductor Mission 2.0.

To support this ecosystem, the government announced the development of City Economic Regions, rejuvenation of 200 legacy industrial clusters, and the creation of five university townships to align academic zones with industrial corridors.

Complementing these are three new chemical parks, a dedicated container manufacturing scheme, and five regional medical tourism hubs integrated with AYUSH centres, all underpinned by a Rs 10,000 crore SME Growth Fund.

Strategic corridors for rare earths, a new biopharma initiative, mandated liquidity support for MSMEs, and customs duty reliefs for critical inputs were also announced. In total, the Budget represents a push of Rs 12.2 lakh crore for manufacturing and infrastructure.

The question, however, is whether this Budget addresses the actual problem or risks becoming another opportunity lost. India's history shows why this distinction matters.

For 70 years, successive governments have rolled out schemes — SEZs, tax cuts, incentives. Yet the results have been incremental rather than transformative. Kandla SEZ is 20 years older than Shenzhen, but while Shenzhen became a global symbol of industrial dynamism, Kandla remains what it was.

The pattern is clear: India's reliance on centralised, ministry-led governance creates weak ecosystems. Unless we recognise this gap and begin to devolve authority to empowered local governance, attract investment, and respond with agility, India will continue to underperform despite its ambitions. The world is re-wiring supply chains; India must re-wire its governance.

Infrastructure gets big thrust with Rs 12.2 lakh cr

Slab to skyline Private developers to gain as overall outlay allocation grows 9%

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

In a major push for infrastructure development, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday announced an allocation of Rs 12.2 lakh crore for infrastructure projects in FY 2026-27, marking a 9% increase over FY 2025-26.

"Public capital expenditure has increased manifold from Rs 2 lakh crore in 2014-15 to Rs 11.2 lakh crore in 2025-26. In the coming year, that is, financial year 2026-27, I propose to increase it to Rs 12.2 lakh crore to continue the momentum," she said.

To address private developers' concerns, Sitharaman announced the creation of an Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund, which would offer prudentially calibrated credit guarantees to lenders to reduce risks during the construction and early operational phases of projects.

The Budget also outlined several key infrastructure initiatives, including dedicated Real-Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) to unlock and recycle real-estate assets of CPSEs (Central Public Sector Enterprises); operationalisation of 20 new National Waterways (NWs) over the next five years, starting with NW-5 in Odisha, to connect the mineral-rich areas of Talcher and Angul, as well as industrial centres like Kalinga Nagar to the ports of Paradip and Dhamra; and the establishment of training institutes as Regional Centres of Excellence (RCEs) along the waterways to develop the required manpower.

The initiatives also include the setting up of a ship-repair ecosystem, catering to inland waterways at Varanasi and Patna, and the launch of a Coastal Cargo Promotion Scheme to incentivise a modal shift from rail and road to coastal shipping and inland waterways, to increase their combined share from 6% to 12% by 2047.

To enhance last-mile and remote connectivity and to promote tourism, the minister proposed incentives to indigenise the manufacture of seaplanes. A Seaplane Viability Gap Funding (VGF) Scheme would also be introduced, she said.

"Projects such as the development of new national waterways, the coastal cargo scheme, ship repair ecosystems for inland waterways, and the proposed East-West dedicated freight corridor will greatly enhance multimodal connectivity and cargo productivity, and help lower logistics costs," said Allcargo Group Chairman Shashi Kiran Shetty.

"Initiatives like the Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund will further increase investor and lender confidence, leading to faster implementation of large-scale projects," he added.

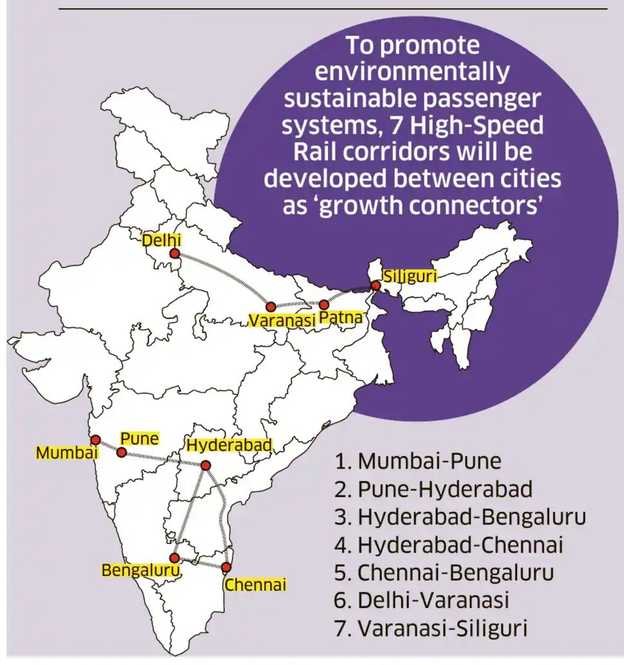
Measures

- Creation of an Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund
- Operationalisation of 20 new National Waterways
- Establishing of training institutes as Regional Centres of Excellence
- Setting up of a ship-repair ecosystem

Building Future

Cities to be developed as growth centres

- A Scheme for Container Manufacturing has been proposed to create a globally competitive container manufacturing ecosystem, with a budgetary allocation of **Rs 10,000 crore over a 5-year period**



Budget focuses on Tier II and III cities, and temple-towns, which need modern infrastructure and basic amenities

- An allocation of **Rs 5,000 crore** per City Economic Region over 5 years is proposed for implementing their plans through a challenge mode with a reform-cum-results-based financing mechanism

ILLUSTRATION: SAJITH KUMAR

Urban potential: Centre targets tier-2, tier-3 growth with city economic regions

Infra impetus Seven proposed city economic regions include Bengaluru, Varanasi, Surat

SUMIT PANDE
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Signalling its intent to boost urban civic infrastructure in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, the government has proposed the creation of city economic regions (CERs) with an allocation of Rs 5,000 crore over the next five years.

According to the budgetary document, the allocation has been proposed for seven city economic regions — Bengaluru, Bhubaneshwar-Puri-Cuttack tricities, Coimbatore-Erode-Tiruppur, Pune, Surat, Varanasi and Vishakhapatanam.

For the big municipal corporations, the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her Sunday budget speech, announced an incentive on borrowing for infrastructure development through the issuance of bonds of over Rs 1,000 crore.

"Cities are India's engine of growth, innovation, and opportunities. This budget aims to further amplify the potential of cities to deliver the economic power of agglomerations," the Finance Minister said while speaking on initiatives taken by the Modi government on infra development.

The focus in the development of CERs would be to build infrastructure and basic amenities in non-metro cities, including temple towns, through "challenge mode with a reform-cum-result based financing."

The government expects the move would give impetus to real estate and logistics demands, while expanding the scope and volume of infrastructure growth in the medium term.

Lower borrowing costs

In another policy announcement aimed to give a fillip to urban infra, the finance minister announced Rs 100 crores for the single bond issuance of more than Rs 1,000 crore by a municipal corporation.

The scheme seeks to lower borrowing costs for big-budget civic bodies like Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Pune and Ahmedabad, which have an annual budget of more than Rs 10,000 crore.

New freight corridor between Dankuni & Surat

The government announced a new dedicated freight corridor between West Bengal's Dankuni and Surat in Gujarat, reports *DHNS*. The FM allocated Rs 2,77,830 crore to the Ministry of Railways for capital expenditure in 2026–27.

The allocation is 10.25% higher. The ministry will get Rs 15,000 crore from Extra Budgetary Resources, the document showed. The railways minister said that maximum funds will be spent on safety and modernisation of infrastructure.

Skilling to seaplanes: Budget charts tourism roadmap

Travel push Sitharaman proposes pilot upskilling programme for 10,000 tour guides across 20 iconic sites through a standardised 12-week hybrid training course

HRITHIK KIRAN BAGADE
BENGALURU, DHNS

Acknowledging the need to unlock India's vast but underutilised tourism potential, the Union Budget has laid out an aggressive roadmap to position tourism as a key driver of employment, foreign exchange earnings and local economic growth. The measures have been welcomed by the travel and hospitality industry.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the setting up of a National Institute of Hospitality by upgrading the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT). "It will function as a bridge between academia, industry and the government," she said.

She also proposed a pilot upskilling programme for 10,000 tour guides across 20 iconic sites through a standardised 12-week hybrid training course, to be conducted in collaboration with an Indian Institute of Management.

A key digital push in the Budget is the creation of a National Destination Digital Knowledge Grid, which will digitally document India's cultural, spiritual and heritage

sites. "This initiative will create a new ecosystem of jobs for local researchers, historians, content creators and technology partners," Sitharaman said.

Welcoming the proposal, Anand Babu, Founder of Digitour, said the digital repository was long overdue. "Heritage is India's biggest 'soft power'. The country hasn't harnessed its full potential yet. Digital tools are the best way to promote this soft power."

The Budget also places strong emphasis on nature and wildlife tourism, proposing the development of ecologically sustainable trekking and hiking trails in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir; Araku Valley in the Eastern Ghats; and Podhigai Malai in the Western Ghats. It also outlines turtle trails at key nesting sites along the coasts of Odisha, Karnataka and Kerala, and bird-watching trails around Pulicat Lake.

To improve connectivity to remote destinations, Sitharaman announced incentives to indigenise the manufacturing of seaplanes, along with the introduction of a Seaplane Viability Gap Funding (VGF) Scheme to support operations.

In a relief for outbound travellers, the minister proposed reducing the Tax Collected at Source (TCS) on overseas tour packages from the current 5% and 20% slabs to a flat 2%, without any threshold.

IN BRIEF

MEA aid to Bangladesh slashed by half

India has not allocated funds for the Chabahar port project in Iran in the Union Budget for 2026-27 and has halved the development assistance for Bangladesh to Rs 60 crore in reflection of frosty bilateral ties.
Bhutan has been allocated the largest share, Rs 2,288 crore, as development aid, followed by Rs 800 crore to Nepal. The allocation for Bangladesh has been pegged at Rs 60 crore, a steep decline from Rs 120 crore last year.

Rs 600 crore for dedicated Chemical Parks

To strengthen domestic chemical manufacturing and cut import dependence, the Centre will launch a scheme to support states in establishing three dedicated Chemical Parks via a challenge route on a cluster-based, plug-and-play model.
Budget documents allocated Rs 600 crore to enhance chemical production capacity for 2026–27, the first direct budgetary support for such infrastructure, amid rising domestic demand.

Rs 6,000 crore allocated for Census 2027

The Union Budget on Sunday allocated Rs 6,000 crore for Census 2027, with the 16th edition of the mega population head count slated to begin on April 1 after a delay of almost six years because of the Covid outbreak. "It includes provisions for the office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India and various schemes of the RGI, including the National Population Register (NPR) and expenditure on Census 2027," the Budget document said.

UNION
BUDGET
SOCIAL

The Indian banking sector today is characterised by strong balance sheets, historic highs in profitability, improved asset quality and coverage exceeding 98% of villages in the country. ”

Voices

The focus on destination development beyond metros, improved physical connectivity and a sharper push for spiritual and heritage circuits reflects a recognition that tourism growth must be geographically-distributed and locally-rooted.

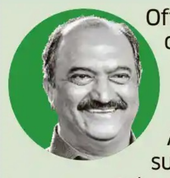
MANOJ BHAT,
MD & CEO of Mahindra Holidays & Resorts India Ltd

Adding 10,000 medical seats in the coming year, alongside training 1.5 lakh caregivers and scaling allied health disciplines, can strengthen the Prime Minister's vision of 'Heal in India, Heal by India'.

DR PRATHAP C REDDY,
Founder and Chairman, Apollo Hospitals

Budget Highlights

1. High-Powered 'Education to Employment and Enterprise' standing committee to focus on services sector
2. Upgrading and establishing new institutions for Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) in 10 selected disciplines
3. Schemes to support states in establishing five hubs for medical value tourism in partnership with the private sector
4. 3 new All India Institutes of Ayurveda, upgrading of AYUSH pharmacies and drug testing labs
5. Tex-eco initiative to promote globally competitive and sustainable textiles and apparels



Often, Budget projections are not achieved due to crises. But now there is clear stagnation affecting the Indian economy. The Budget itself shows that expenditure in several sectors has been reduced. Allocations for agriculture and food subsidies had been reduced, and similar cuts were seen in health, education, and science and technology sectors. All these indicate that the central government does not have sufficient funds.

K N BALAGOPAL,
Kerala finance minister ”

VB-G RAM G pockets more than MGNREGS

Jobs scheme juggle
Rs 95,692 cr for new scheme, Rs 30k cr for old one till transition

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), or VB-G RAM G scheme, which will replace Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) did not find mention in the Budget speech.

But Rs 1.26 lakh crore was allocated for the new and existing rural jobs guarantee schemes for 2026-27.

Of this, Rs 95,692 crore was allocated to VB-G RAM G, while Rs 30,000 crore was set aside for outgoing MGNREGS.

The total expenditure on MGNREGS, as per revised estimates from 2025-26, was Rs 88,000 crore, while initially, Rs 86,000 crore was allocated.

Rural Development and Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan told reporters after the budget that VB-G RAM G, to be notified by the Centre, will give states 6 months to transition from MGNREGS.

MGNREGS will continue till VB-G RAM G scheme is fully implemented and pending works are completed, rural development ministry officials have said separately.

The VB-G RAM G scheme guarantees 125 days of employment, up from 100 days under MGNREGS.

Unlike MGNREGS, where Centre paid 100% of the wage bill, VB-G RAM G is a centrally sponsored scheme with fund-sharing ratio of 60:40 between the Centre and most

states, 90:10 for North-Eastern Region (NER) states, Himalayan states and union territories with legislatures, and 100% central share for union territories without legislatures.

Chouhan, who has highlighted misuse of funds under MGNREGS, said that since the new scheme follows a different funding pattern from MGNREGS, maintaining distinct allocations is necessary to ensure uninterrupted wage payments and smooth execution of ongoing works, while allowing states adequate time to realign administrative and financial systems.

The central government is framing rules for smooth transition of existing MGNREGS workers to new scheme, as well as for normative allocation of funds to states, he said. But Congress has criticised the government for scrapping MGNREGS.

"A listless, heartless budget from a clueless government. What began last session with the axing of MGNREGA has gone forward with massive welfare cuts in the name of 'fiscal discipline'," Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal posted on X.

According to Budget documents, total allocation for department of rural development is Rs 1,94,368.81 crore, marginally up from last fiscal - Rs 1,86,995.61 crore, as per revised estimates.

The allocation for the department of land resources for 2026-27 is Rs 2,654.33. In 2025-26, Rs 2,651 was allocated for this department, while revised estimate puts expenditure at Rs 1,757.4 crore.

By invitation

M GOVINDA RAO
Former director, NIPFP, and member of the 14th Finance Commission.

Budget 2026: A tale of missed opportunities

While emphasising that India is in a goldilocks zone, experiencing high growth with low inflation even in a difficult environment of geopolitical tensions & trade disruptions, the Economic Survey had underlined the need to initiate reforms to sustain high growth.

Although the Survey pointed out that the economy has moved into a higher growth trajectory, it did point out the surprising lack of foreign investment and the need to attract foreign capital.

In this scenario, the budget was expected to initiate proposals to provide impetus to attract foreign investment.

The market expectation was that the finance minister will help the cause by rationalising the long term capital gains tax by removing discriminatory nature of mutual funds based on debt and equity.

There were expectations of ensuring greater stability and certainty in tax policy to prevent it from restoring its character as residence-based after the Supreme Court ruled in January 2026 that Tiger Global's USD 1.6 billion stake sale in Flipkart to Walmart (2018) is taxable in India. But the uncertainty on this front has continued. It is important to assure the foreign investors that the country follows a stable and well accepted residence-based policy.

> The disappointing aspect of the budget is that it has lost another opportunity to rationalise the customs tariff. Simultaneously, regulations and non-tariff barriers can be reduced.

The government was able to adhere to budgeted fiscal deficit as a ratio of GDP despite lower tax revenues due to rationalisation of GST.

The revised estimate of tax revenue for 2025-26 is lower than the budget estimate by Rs 1.7 lakh crore, or 0.45% of GDP, and yet the fiscal deficit was contained at 4.4% of GDP.

On the macroeconomic front, the budget is on expected lines. The trend of maintaining high capital expenditures while continuing fiscal consolidation has continued.

The disappointing aspect of the budget is that it has lost another opportunity to rationalise the customs tariff. If we are serious about orienting policies to achieve 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, the most important reform is to impart competitiveness to manufacturing in order to make a commitment to roll back customs duties. This will ensure that the revenue does not decline. Simultaneously, regulations and non-tariff barriers can be reduced.

Tax cut for studies abroad, girls' hostel in every district

Boost for Education
5 university townships near industrial, logistic corridors

AMRITA MADHUKALYA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

A high-powered 'Education to Employment and Enterprise' committee to recommend measures to boost services sector, establishment of 5 university townships, girls' hostel in every district for students pursuing STEM, and a National Institute of Design (NID) in the east are key offerings for education.

Allocation for education ministry increased by 8.27%. A significant announcement is reduction of remittance tax for students seeking to study abroad from 5% to 2%. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the committee will help India chase a 10% global share in services sector by 2047.

"...(the) committee (will) recommend measures that focus on the services sector... This will make us a global leader in services, with a 10% global share by 2047. The committee will prioritise areas to optimise potential for growth, employment and exports. It will assess impact of emerging technologies, including AI, on jobs and skill requirements and propose measures," she said.

The minister said the government will support states in creating five university townships near major industrial and logistic corridors. "They will host universities, colleges, research institutions, skill centres and residential complexes".

The education ministry's allocation rose from Rs 1,28,650 crore last year to Rs 1,39,289 crore this year – up 8.27%. Of this, allocation for department of higher education is Rs 55,727.22 crore, up by Rs 5,649.27 crore (or 11.28%) from last year.

The allocation for department of school education and literacy for FY 2026-27 is Rs 83,562 crore, highest ever for it. This is an increase of Rs 4,990 crore (or 6.35%) from last fiscal. When compared to revised estimates of FY 2025-26, it is up by Rs 12,995 crore (or 18.42%).

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said that the sector was the sixth most prioritised in this Budget.

"This year, India's girls achieved best proficiency in STEM education globally. The achievements in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education are superior to those of other countries. To accelerate this, the government, along with states, will establish state-of-the-art girls' hostel in every district," Pradhan said.

He said reducing remittance tax from 5% to 2% will help students pursue research, post-doctoral studies & general education abroad.

Energising the sector

- High-powered committee to recommend measures to boost services sector
- Will help India chase 10% global share in services sector by 2047
- Telescope infra facilities to be upgraded to promote study of astrophysics and astronomy
- New setups will be established in four locations

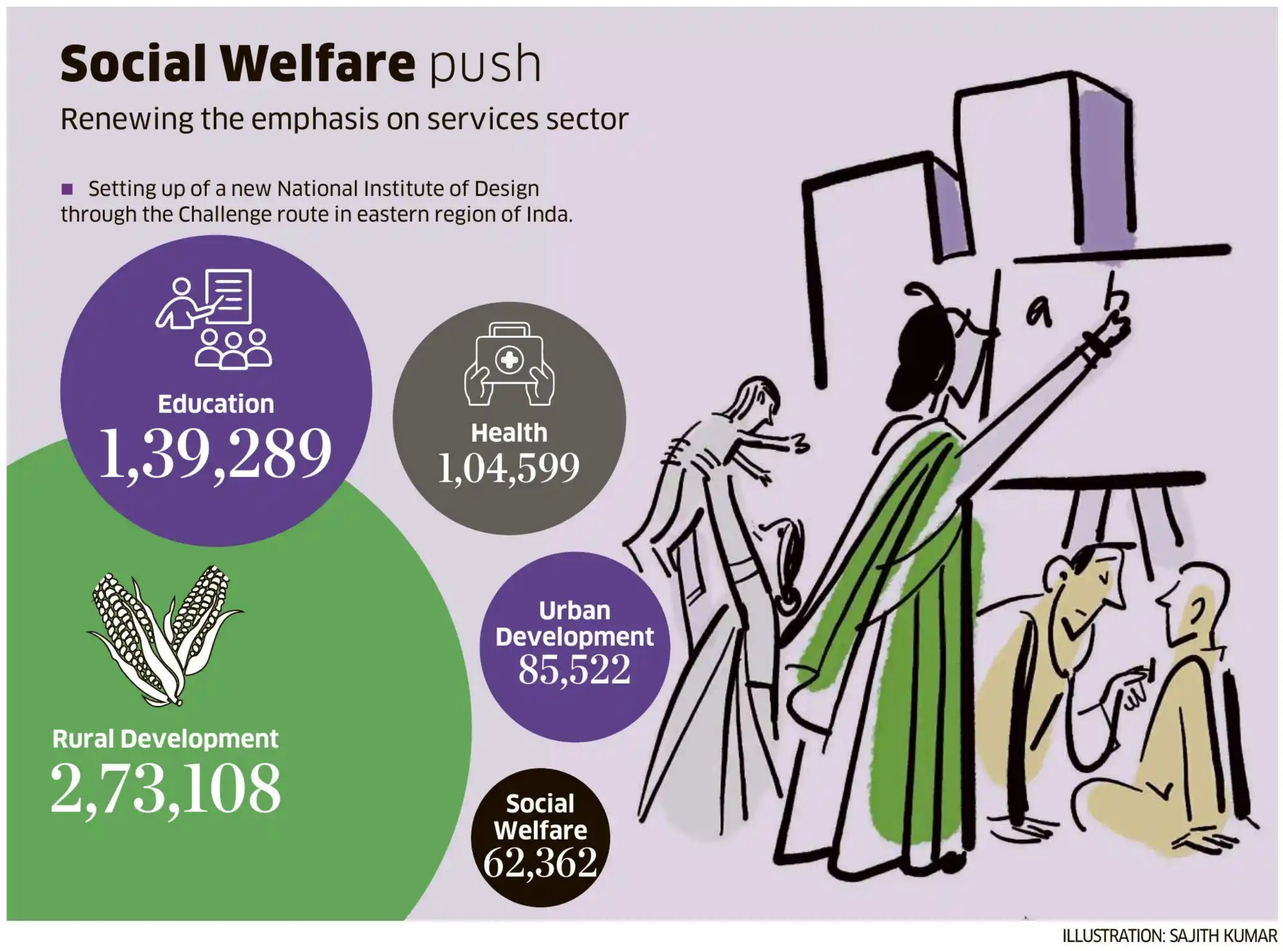

Social Welfare push
Renewing the emphasis on services sector
Setting up of a new National Institute of Design through the Challenge route in eastern region of Inda.
Education 1,39,289
Health 1,04,599
Urban Development 85,522
Rural Development 2,73,108
Social Welfare 62,362

ILLUSTRATION: SAJITH KUMAR

Unique selling point in gender budget: SHE marts by self-help groups

Empowering entrepreneurs
FM says it's the next step after Lakhpati Didi scheme

AMRITA MADHUKALYA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Self-help groups are a focus point in this year's Budget, with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announcing women-led community-owned retail outlets called self-help entrepreneur (SHE) marts, which she said was the next step of the flagship Lakhpati Didi scheme. In all, the gender budget this year saw an increase of 11% in allocation from last year.

"Building on the success of Lakhpati Didi programme, I propose to help women take the next step from credit-led livelihoods to being owners of enterprises. SHE marts will be set up as community-owned retail outlets within the cluster level federations through enhanced and innovative financing instruments," the minister said in the Budget speech.

Allocation rise

The gender budget component saw an allocation of Rs 5,00,878.73 crore, an increase of 11% from the allocation in the previous year (Rs 4,49,028.68 crore).

However, the revised budget for 2025-26 was Rs 3,97,884.98 crore. The gender budget this year accounts for 9.36% of the total Budget, an increase from

8.86% in FY 2025-26.

The allocation in part A of the gender budget – schemes where 100% allocation is for women – rose marginally from Rs 1,02,274.89 crore in FY 2025-26 (with revised estimates of Rs 72,117.37 crore) to Rs 1,07,688.42 crore this fiscal.

PM-GKAY

A lion's share of the gender budget allocation went to Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY) scheme that supplies foodgrains to the needy, which saw an allocation of Rs 1,08,915.75 crore, an increase from Rs 1,07,638.78 crore last fiscal.

PMAY-G

Apart from that, key allocations went to the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin scheme, which was allocated Rs 52,575 crore, and Jal Jeevan Mission (Rs 33,022.96 crore).

The allocation for the women and child development ministry saw a marginal increase in allocation – up 4.8% from Rs 26,889.69 crore in FY 2025-26 to Rs 28,183.06 crore in 2026-27. The bulk of the ministry's allocation was to the POSHAN scheme, which was earmarked Rs 23,100 crore this fiscal.

Integrated scheme weaves promise for textile sector

Atma Nirbhar pitch Focus on achieving self-reliance in fibres; mega parks and khadi push welcomed by hubs

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
CHENNAI, DHNS

The Budget proposed an integrated programme to boost growth in labour-intensive industries, besides announcing mega textile parks and a new scheme named after Mahatma Gandhi to strengthen khadi, handloom and handicrafts sectors.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the programme will have five components, including initiatives to promote globally competitive and sustainable textiles and apparel, and to achieve self-reliance in natural fibres such as silk, wool, and jute, as well as man-made and new-age fibres.

The announcement is significant, as textile hubs across the country — including Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu — are increasingly focusing on man-made fibres. The sector is facing a critical period, particularly due to 50% tariffs by US on Indian imports. The announcement also comes at a time when there is a glimmer of hope following the Free Trade Agreement signed with the European Union.

The programme includes a textile expansion and employment scheme to modernise traditional clusters, with capital support for machinery, technology upgradation and common testing and certification centres. Another measure is the launch of a National Handloom and Handicraft programme to integrate and strengthen existing schemes and ensure targeted support for weavers and artisans.

A tex-eco initiative to promote globally competitive and sustainable textiles and apparels, and Samarth 2.0 to modernise the textile skilling ecosystem in collaboration with industry and academic institutions are other initiatives.

Sitharaman announced the setting up of mega textile parks in 'challenge mode', aimed at bringing value addition to technical textiles.

Exporters and textile industry in Tiruppur and Coimbatore welcomed the announcements as "constructive and positive". They said the schemes signal a outcome-oriented intent to accelerate competitiveness in domestic and global markets.

The Tiruppur Exporters' Association (TEA) and the Southern India Mills Association (SIMA) said reforms such as enhanced credit availability, guarantee covers for MSMEs, tailored credit cards and support for first-time entrepreneurs will benefit the industry.

Clothed in reforms

- National Handloom & Handicraft programme to integrate existing schemes
- Tex-eco initiative for globally competitive, sustainable apparel
- Samarth 2.0 to modernise textile skilling
- Industry welcomes steps, stresses need to remove 11% import duty on cotton

IN BRIEF

Content creator labs to come up in 15k schools

With the animation, visual effects, gaming and comics (AVGC) sector projected to require two million professionals by 2030, the budget unveiled a plan for talent development in the sector by helping set up content creator labs in 15,000 secondary schools and 500 colleges.
A first-time allocation of Rs 250 crore has been made in the Demands for Grants for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for talent development in the AVGC sector.

Funds for Prasar Bharati to support radio movement

The information and broadcasting ministry has been allocated Rs 4,551.94 crore in the Budget, with a substantial amount marked for Prasar Bharati, India's public broadcaster, besides funds for talent development in animation, visual effects and gaming and supporting the community radio movement.
A total of Rs 4,551.94 crore has been allocated for the I&B ministry against the revised estimate of Rs 6,103.02 crore for 2025-26.

Govt to train 20,000 veterinarians

In a push to diversify rural incomes and create job opportunities beyond traditional farming, the finance minister announced initiatives for the livestock, fisheries and high-value agriculture sectors.
Pointing out that livestock contributes close to 16% of farm income, including for poor and marginal households, the finance minister proposed a loan-linked capital subsidy scheme to scale up availability of veterinary professionals by more than 20,000.

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*Terms and Conditions Apply. Savings applicable till 31st January 2026. Total Savings mentioned is a sum of savings from cash back, Nil processing fee and 5 free services (3 standard free services and 2 additional free services). Savings of free service are towards scheduled labour charges. Applicable offers may vary across models/states. Savings on Nil PF may vary across locations depending on financer. Finance at the sole discretion of financer. Stunts have been performed by experts, under professional supervision, in a controlled and enclosed environment, in isolation from general public or public roads. Do not attempt to replicate these stunts and always follow traffic and safety rules. Pulsar 125 offer only on neon & carbon fibre models. Check with Bajaj dealer for more details. Road Side Assistance is provided by third parties and is subject to their terms and conditions.

Authorised Dealers For Bajaj Auto Ltd.: Bangalore • Bommanahalli AMBA BAJAJ: 9535411100 • HSR Layout AMBA BAJAJ: 8884333732 • Sarjapur AMBA BAJAJ: 7406688884• BTM Layout AMBA BAJAJ: 9513926221• Madiwala AMBA BAJAJ: 9945000048• Electronic City AMBA BAJAJ: 8971711118• Nayandahalli RV BAJAJ: 6360308373 • Moodalapalya RV BAJAJ: 9740444545 • Kengeri RV BAJAJ: 7353763305 • Giri Nagar RV BAJAJ: 7353763302• Vijaynagar RV BAJAJ: 7353763307• Banashankari POPULAR BAJAJ: 9945111874 • Rajajinagar POPULAR BAJAJ : 6366554001 • Koramangala POPULAR BAJAJ: 9845589079 • Konankunte POPULAR BAJAJ: 7760967834 • Ramnagara POPULAR BAJAJ: 7760967832 • Kanakpura POPULAR BAJAJ: 9972533890 • POPULAR BAJAJ Channapatna 9901947666 • POPULAR BAJAJ Uttarahalli 9972095890 • POPULAR BAJAJ Gottigere 7760996891 • Yelahanka KALYANI BAJAJ: 9449849618 • Mekhri circle KALYANI BAJAJ 8884413593 Mathikere KALYANI BAJAJ: 8884430126 • Chikkaballapura KALYANI BAJAJ: 8884413594 • Devanahalli KALYANI BAJAJ: 9449849624 • Marathahalli KHIVRAJ BAJAJ: 9036091986 • Kasturba Rd KHIVRAJ BAJAJ: 9035060140 • Indiranagar KHIVRAJ BAJAJ: 9035060139 • Hennur KHIVRAJ BAJAJ: 9742155225 • Banaswadi KHIVRAJ BAJAJ: 9035060147 • Yeshwanthpur : KHIVRAJ BAJAJ: - 9148752305 • Hesargatta KHIVRAJ BAJAJ: 9035060148 • Whitefield KHIVRAJ BAJAJ: 8618840097 • Hoskote KHIVRAJ BAJAJ: 9035005075 • Magadi Rd ANANT BAJAJ: 9980009166 • Laggere ANANT BAJAJ: 9900072690 • Hubli CHANNAMMA BAJAJ: 9008030908 • Arvind Nagar branch 8884771881 Gadag CHANNAMMA BAJAJ: 7090665850 • Sirsi CHANNAMMA BAJAJ: 8884645609 • Haveri CHANNAMMA BAJAJ: 8151884422 • Belgaum JAGASHREE BAJAJ: 988690116, MISHA BAJAJ: 9632684225. • Chikodi MISHA BAJAJ: 9632765225 • Gokak MISHA BAJAJ: 9035454225 • Bellary AADI BAJAJ: 9606050250• Raichur SHREE BALAJI AUTOMOBILES: 9880235539• Koppal I A BAJAJ: 9632512938• Hospet AADI BAJAJ:9731361414 • Hagaribommanahalli AADI BAJAJ: 9900363010• SIRUGUPPA AADI BAJAJ: 9110217558 • Bijapur BIJJARGI BAJAJ (BLDE Road): 7022627411•(Bus Stand Road) 7022627412• Bagalkot BIJJARGI BIKES: 9148448324 • Sindagi BIJJARGI BAJAJ 8861946802• Bidar SINDOL BAJAJ 9513226555 • Chitradurga BTV BAJAJ: Ph: 8310553554 • Hiriyur BTV BAJAJ: Ph: 8310553554 • Challakere BTV BAJAJ 8310553554 • Davangere JAIN BAJAJ: Ph: 9343636805, 9663566620 • Harihara JAIN BAJAJ: Ph: 9632300444 • Gulbarga VKG BAJAJ: 9632018700 • Yadgir VKG BAJAJ: 8867776567 • Humnabad VKG BAJAJ 8050889160 • Shimoga SUPREME BAJAJ: 8105000999 • Sagar SUPREME BAJAJ: 9008339799 • Bhadravathi SUPREME BAJAJ: 9008352799 • Chikkamagalur SUPREME BAJAJ: 9008379799 • Tarikere SUPREME BAJAJ: 9008569799 • Hosanagar SUPREME BAJAJ 9731767799 • Anandpura SUPREME BAJAJ 9663501499 • Hassan ARPITA BAJAJ: 9902439255, Arsikere ARPITA BAJAJ: 9964094535 • Kolar KHIVRAJ 9611768292 • KGF KHIVRAJ BAJAJ: 7349507477• Tumkur AKSHAYA BAJAJ: 7259040212• Tiptur AKSHAYA BAJAJ: 7259040226 • Sira AKSHAYA BAJAJ: 7259040328 • Kunigal AKSHAYA BAJAJ: 7338662706 • Madhugiri AKSHAYA BAJAJ: 7259040340 • BH Road: 7338662687 • Mysore Saraswathipuram POPULAR BAJAJ: 9148101113 • Chamarajapuram POPULAR BAJAJ: 7259786271 • Vontikoppal STAR BAJAJ: 9886959722 • Mandya POPULAR BAJAJ: 7760967900 • Chamarajanagara PATEL BAJAJ: 9480494888 • Hunsur STAR BAJAJ: 8884374777 • Kushalnagar POPULAR BAJAJ: 7259786276 • Nanjangud STAR BAJAJ: 9742100252 • NR Mohalla STAR BAJAJ: 8095777706 • Balmatta SUPREME BAJAJ: 9606973192 • Kuloor SUPREME BAJAJ: 9606237547 • Surathkal SUPREME BAJAJ: 9606973193 • Thokottu 9606702429 • B C Road 7618715273 • Bidar SINDOL BAJAJ 9513226555 • UDUPI SAANVI BAJAJ 8861135225.